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RUDYARD KIPLING

THE LIGHT THAT FAILED

'CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS'

A STORY OF THE GRAND BANKS

BY

RUDYARD KIPLING

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THE LIGHT THAT FAILED

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DEDICATION

If I were hanged on the highest hill,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!
I know whose love would follow me still,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

If I were drowned in the deepest sea,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!
I know whose tears would come down to me,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

If I were damned of body and soul,
I know whose prayers would make me whole,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

THE LIGHT THAT FAILED

CHAPTER I

So we settled it all when the storm was done
As comf'y as comf'y could be;
And I was to wait in the barn, my dears,
Because I was only three,
And Teddy would run to the rainbow's foot,
Because he was five and a man.
And that's how it all began, my dears,
And that's how it all began.

'Big Barn Stories.'

'WHAT do you think she'd do if she caught us? We oughtn't to have it, you know,' said Maisie.

'Beat me, and lock you up in your bedroom,' Dick answered, without hesitation. 'Have you got the cartridges?'

'Yes; they're in my pocket, but they are joggling horribly. Do pin-fire cartridges go off of their own accord?'

'Don't know. Take the revolver, if you are afraid, and let me carry them.'

'I'm not afraid.' Maisie strode forward swiftly, a hand in her pocket and her chin in the air. Dick followed with a small pin-fire revolver.

The children had discovered that their lives would be unendurable without pistol-practice. After much forethought and self-denial, Dick had saved seven shillings

and sixpence, the price of a badly-constructed Belgian revolver. Maisie could only contribute half a crown to the syndicate for the purchase of a hundred cartridges. 'You can save better than I can, Dick,' she explained; 'I like nice things to eat, and it doesn't matter to you. Besides, boys ought to do these things.'

Dick grumbled a little at the arrangement, but went out and made the purchases, which the children were then on their way to test. Revolvers did not lie in the scheme of their daily life as decreed for them by the guardian who was incorrectly supposed to stand in the place of a mother to these two orphans. Dick had been under her care for six years, during which time she had made her profit of the allowances supposed to be expended on his clothes, and, partly through thoughtlessness, partly through a natural desire to pain,—she was a widow of some years anxious to marry again,—had made his days burdensome on his young shoulders. Where he had looked for love, she gave him first aversion and then hate. Where he growing older had sought a little sympathy, she gave him ridicule. The many hours that she could spare from the ordering of her small house she devoted to what she called the home-training of Dick Heldar. Her religion, manufactured in the main by her own intelligence and a keen study of the Scriptures, was an aid to her in this matter. At such times as she herself was not personally displeased with Dick, she left him to understand that he had a heavy account to settle with his Creator; wherefore Dick learned to loathe his God as intensely as he loathed Mrs. Jennett; and this is not a wholesome frame of mind for the young. Since she chose to regard him as a hopeless liar, when dread of pain drove him to his first untruth, he

naturally developed into a liar, but an economical and self-contained one, never throwing away the least unnecessary fib, and never hesitating at the blackest, were it only plausible, that might make his life a little easier. The treatment taught him at least the power of living alone,—a power that was of service to him when he went to a public school and the boys laughed at his clothes, which were poor in quality and much mended. In the holidays he returned to the teachings of Mrs. Jennett, and, that the chain of discipline might not be weakened by association with the world, was generally beaten, on one count or another, before he had been twelve hours under her roof.

The autumn of one year brought him a companion in bondage, a long-haired, gray-eyed little atom, as self-contained as himself, who moved about the house silently, and for the first few weeks spoke only to the goat that was her chiefest friend on earth and lived in the back-garden. Mrs. Jennett objected to the goat on the grounds that he was un-Christian,—which he certainly was. 'Then,' said the atom, choosing her words very deliberately, 'I shall write to my lawyer-people and tell them that you are a very bad woman. Amomma is mine, mine, mine!' Mrs. Jennett made a movement to the hall, where certain umbrellas and canes stood in a rack. The atom understood as clearly as Dick what this meant. 'I have been beaten before,' she said, still in the same passionless voice; 'I have been beaten worse than you can ever beat me. If you beat me I shall write to my lawyer-people and tell them that you do not give me enough to eat. I am not afraid of you.' Mrs. Jennett did not go into the hall, and the atom, after a pause to assure herself that all danger of war was past, went out, to weep bitterly on Amomma's neck.

Dick learned to know her as Maisie, and at first mis-

trusted her profoundly, for he feared that she might interfere with the small liberty of action left to him. She did not, however; and she volunteered no friendliness until Dick had taken the first steps. Long before the holidays were over, the stress of punishment shared in common drove the children together, if it were only to play into each other's hands as they prepared lies for Mrs. Jennett's use. When Dick returned to school, Maisie whispered, 'Now I shall be all alone to take care of myself; but,' and she nodded her head bravely, 'I can do it. You promised to send Amomma a grass collar. Send it soon.' A week later she asked for that collar by return of post, and was not pleased when she learned that it took time to make. When at last Dick forwarded the gift she forgot to thank him for it.

Many holidays had come and gone since that day, and Dick had grown into a lanky hobbledehoy more than ever conscious of his bad clothes. Not for a moment had Mrs. Jennett relaxed her tender care of him, but the average canings of a public school — Dick fell under punishment about three times a month — filled him with contempt for her powers. 'She doesn't hurt,' he explained to Maisie, who urged him to rebellion, 'and she is kinder to you after she has whacked me.' Dick shambled through the days unkept in body and savage in soul, as the smaller boys of the school learned to know, for when the spirit moved him he would hit them, cunningly and with science. The same spirit made him more than once try to tease Maisie, but the girl refused to be made unhappy. 'We are both miserable as it is,' said she. 'What is the use of trying to make things worse? Let's find things to do, and forget things.'

The pistol was the outcome of that search. It could only

be used on the muddiest foreshore of the beach, far away from bathing-machines and pier-heads, below the grassy slopes of Fort Keeling. The tide ran out nearly two miles on that coast, and the many-coloured mud-banks, touched by the sun, sent up a lamentable smell of dead weed. It was late in the afternoon when Dick and Maisie arrived on their ground, Amomma trotting patiently behind them.

'Mf!' said Maisie, sniffing the air. 'I wonder what makes the sea so smelly. I don't like it.'

'You never like anything that isn't made just for you,' said Dick bluntly. 'Give me the cartridges, and I'll try first shot. How far does one of these little revolvers carry?'

'Oh, half a mile,' said Maisie promptly. 'At least it makes an awful noise. Be careful with the cartridges; I don't like those jagged stick-up things on the rim. Dick, do be careful.'

'All right. I know how to load. I'll fire at the breakwater out there.'

He fired, and Amomma ran away bleating. The bullet threw up a spurt of mud to the right of the weed-wreathed piles.

'Throws high and to the right. You try, Maisie. Mind, it's loaded all round.'

Maisie took the pistol and stepped delicately to the verge of the mud, her hand firmly closed on the butt, her mouth and left eye screwed up. Dick sat down on a tuft of bank and laughed. Amomma returned very cautiously. He was accustomed to strange experiences in his afternoon walks, and, finding the cartridge-box unguarded, made investigations with his nose. Maisie fired, but could not see where the bullet went.

'I think it hit the post,' she said, shading her eyes and looking out across the sailless sea.

'I know it has gone out to the Marazion Bell Buoy,' said Dick, with a chuckle. 'Fire low and to the left; then perhaps you'll get it. Oh, look at Amomma!—he's eating the cartridges!'

Maisie turned, the revolver in her hand, just in time to see Amomma scampering away from the pebbles Dick threw after him. Nothing is sacred to a billy-goat. Being well fed and the adored of his mistress, Amomma had naturally swallowed two loaded pin-fire cartridges. Maisie hurried up to assure herself that Dick had not miscounted the tale.

'Yes, he's eaten two.'

'Horrid little beast! Then they'll joggle about inside him and blow up, and serve him right. . . . Oh, Dick! have I killed you?'

Revolvers are tricky things for young hands to deal with. Maisie could not explain how it had happened, but a veil of reeking smoke separated her from Dick, and she was quite certain that the pistol had gone off in his face. Then she heard him sputter, and dropped on her knees beside him, crying, 'Dick, you aren't hurt, are you? I didn't mean it.'

'Of course you didn't,' said Dick, coming out of the smoke and wiping his cheek. 'But you nearly blinded me. That powder stuff stings awfully.' A neat little splash of gray lead on a stone showed where the bullet had gone. Maisie began to whimper.

'Don't,' said Dick, jumping to his feet and shaking himself. 'I'm not a bit hurt.'

'No, but I might have killed you,' protested Maisie, the corners of her mouth drooping. 'What should I have done then?'

'Gone home and told Mrs. Jennett.' Dick grinned

at the thought; then, softening, 'Please don't worry about it. Besides, we are wasting time. We've got to get back to tea. I'll take the revolver for a bit.'

Maisie would have wept on the least encouragement, but Dick's indifference, albeit his hand was shaking as he picked up the pistol, restrained her. She lay panting on the beach while Dick methodically bombarded the breakwater. 'Got it at last!' he exclaimed, as a lock of weed flew from the wood.

'Let me try,' said Maisie imperiously. 'I'm all right now.'

They fired in turns till the rickety little revolver nearly shook itself to pieces, and Amomma the outcast—because he might blow up at any moment—browsed in the background and wondered why stones were thrown at him. Then they found a balk of timber floating in a pool which was commanded by the seaward slope of Fort Keeling, and they sat down together before this new target.

'Next holidays,' said Dick, as the now thoroughly fouled revolver kicked wildly in his hand, 'we'll get another pistol,—central fire,—that will carry farther.'

'There won't be any next holidays for me,' said Maisie, 'I'm going away.'

'Where to?'

'I don't know. My lawyers have written to Mrs. Jennett, and I've got to be educated somewhere,—in France, perhaps,—I don't know where; but I shall be glad to go away.'

'I shan't like it a bit. I suppose I shall be left. Look here, Maisie, is it really true you're going? Then these holidays will be the last I shall see anything of you; and I go back to school next week. I wish—'

The young blood turned his cheeks scarlet. Maisie

was picking grass-tufts and throwing them down the slope at a yellow sea-poppy nodding all by itself to the illimitable levels of the mud-flats and the milk-white sea beyond.

'I wish,' she said, after a pause, 'that I could see you again some time. You wish that too?'

'Yes, but it would have been better if—if—you had—shot straight over there—down by the breakwater.'

Maisie looked with large eyes for a moment. And this was the boy who only ten days before had decorated Amomma's horns with cut-paper ham-frills and turned him out, a bearded derision, among the public ways! Then she dropped her eyes: this was not the boy.

'Don't be stupid,' she said reprovingly, and with swift instinct attacked the side-issue. 'How selfish you are! Just think what I should have felt if that horrid thing had killed you! I'm quite miserable enough already.'

'Why? Because you're going away from Mrs. Jennett?'

'No.'

'From me, then?'

No answer for a long time. Dick dared not look at her. He felt, though he did not know, all that the past four years had been to him, and this the more acutely since he had no knowledge to put his feelings in words.

'I don't know,' she said. 'I suppose it is.'

'Maisie, you must know. I'm not supposing.'

'Let's go home,' said Maisie weakly.

But Dick was not minded to retreat.

'I can't say things,' he pleaded, 'and I'm awfully sorry for teasing you about Amomma the other day. It's all different now, Maisie, can't you see? And you might

have told me that you were going, instead of leaving me to find out.'

'You didn't. I did tell. Oh, Dick, what's the use of worrying?'

'There isn't any; but we've been together years and years, and I didn't know how much I cared.'

'I don't believe you ever did care.'

'No, I didn't; but I do,—I care awfully now. Maisie,' he gulped,—'Maisie, darling, say you care too, please.'

'I do; indeed I do; but it won't be any use.'

'Why?'

'Because I am going away.'

'Yes, but if you promise before you go. Only say—will you?' A second 'darling' came to his lips more easily than the first. There were few endearments in Dick's home or school life; he had to find them by instinct. Dick caught the little hand blackened with the escaped gas of the revolver.

'I promise,' she said solemnly; 'but if I care there is no need for promising.'

'And you do care?' For the first time in the past few minutes their eyes met and spoke for them who had no skill in speech. . . .

'Oh, Dick, don't! please don't! It was all right when we said good-morning; but now it's all different!' Amomma looked on from afar. He had seen his property quarrel frequently, but he had never seen kisses exchanged before. The yellow sea-poppy was wiser, and nodded its head approvingly. Considered as a kiss, that was a failure, but since it was the first, other than those demanded by duty, in all the world that either had ever given or taken, it opened to them new worlds, and every one of them glorious, so that they were lifted above

the consideration of any worlds at all, especially those in which tea is necessary, and sat still, holding each other's hands and saying not a word.

'You can't forget now,' said Dick at last. There was that on his cheek that stung more than gunpowder.

'I shouldn't have forgotten anyhow,' said Maisie, and they looked at each other and saw that each was changed from the companion of an hour ago to a wonder and a mystery they could not understand. The sun began to set, and a night-wind thrashed along the bents of the foreshore.

'We shall be awfully late for tea,' said Maisie. 'Let's go home.'

'Let's use the rest of the cartridges first,' said Dick; and he helped Maisie down the slope of the fort to the sea,—a descent that she was quite capable of covering at full speed. Equally gravely Maisie took the grimy hand. Dick bent forward clumsily; Maisie drew the hand away, and Dick blushed.

'It's very pretty,' he said.

'Pooh!' said Maisie, with a little laugh of gratified vanity. She stood close to Dick as he loaded the revolver for the last time and fired over the sea, with a vague notion at the back of his head that he was protecting Maisie from all the evils in the world. A puddle far across the mud caught the last rays of the sun and turned into a wrathful red disc. The light held Dick's attention for a moment, and as he raised his revolver there fell upon him a renewed sense of the miraculous, in that he was standing by Maisie who had promised to care for him for an indefinite length of time till such date as—A gust of the growing wind drove the girl's long black hair across his face as she stood with her hand

on his shoulder calling Amomma 'a little beast,' and for a moment he was in the dark,—a darkness that stung. The bullet went singing out to the empty sea.

'Spoilt my aim,' said he, shaking his head. 'There aren't any more cartridges; we shall have to run home.' But they did not run. They walked very slowly, arm in arm. And it was a matter of indifference to them whether the neglected Amomma with two pin-fire cartridges in his inside blew up or trotted beside them; for they had come into a golden heritage and were disposing of it with all the wisdom of all their years.

'And I shall be—' quoth Dick valiantly. Then he checked himself: 'I don't know what I shall be. I don't seem to be able to pass any exams., but I can make awful caricatures of the masters. Ho! ho!'

'Be an artist, then,' said Maisie. 'You're always laughing at my trying to draw; and it will do you good.'

'I'll never laugh at anything you do,' he answered. 'I'll be an artist, and I'll do things.'

'Artists always want money, don't they?'

'I've got a hundred and twenty pounds a year of my own. My guardians tell me I'm to have it when I come of age. That will be enough to begin with.'

'Ah, I'm rich,' said Maisie. 'I've got three hundred a year all my own when I'm twenty-one. That's why Mrs. Jennett is kinder to me than she is to you. I wish, though, that I had somebody that belonged to me,—just a father or a mother.'

'You belong to me,' said Dick, 'for ever and ever.'

'Yes, we belong—forever. It's very nice.' She squeezed his arm. The kindly darkness hid them both, and, emboldened because he could only just see the profile of Maisie's cheek with the long lashes veiling the gray eyes,

Dick at the front door delivered himself of the words he had been boggling over for the last two hours.

'And I—love you, Maisie,' he said, in a whisper that seemed to him to ring across the world,—the world that he would to-morrow or the next day set out to conquer.

There was a scene, not, for the sake of discipline, to be reported, when Mrs. Jennett would have fallen upon him, first for disgraceful unpunctuality, and secondly, for nearly killing himself with a forbidden weapon.

'I was playing with it, and it went off by itself,' said Dick, when the powder-pocked cheek could no longer be hidden, 'but if you think you're going to lick me you're wrong. You are never going to touch me again. Sit down and give me my tea. You can't cheat us out of that, anyhow.'

Mrs. Jennett gasped and became livid. Maisie said nothing, but encouraged Dick with her eyes, and he behaved abominably all that evening. Mrs. Jennett prophesied an immediate judgment of Providence and a descent into Tophet later, but Dick walked in Paradise and would not hear. Only when he was going to bed Mrs. Jennett recovered and asserted herself. He had bidden Maisie good-night with down-dropped eyes and from a distance.

'If you aren't a gentleman you might try to behave like one,' said Mrs. Jennett spitefully. 'You've been quarrelling with Maisie again.'

This meant that the usual good-night kiss had been omitted. Maisie, white to the lips, thrust her cheek forward with a fine air of indifference, and was duly pecked by Dick, who tramped out of the room red as fire. That night he dreamed a wild dream. He had won all the world

and brought it to Maisie in a cartridge-box, but she turned it over with her foot, and, instead of saying, 'Thank you,' cried—

'Where is the grass collar you promised for Amomma? Oh, how selfish you are!'

CHAPTER II

Then we brought the lances down, then the bugles blew
When we went to Kandahar, ridin' two an' two,
Ridin', ridin', ridin' two an' two,
Ta-ra-ra-ra-ra-ra-ra,
All the way to Kandahar, ridin' two an' two.
'Barrack-Room Ballad.'

'I'M not angry with the British public, but I wish we had a few thousand of them scattered among these rocks. They wouldn't be in such a hurry to get at their morning papers then. Can't you imagine the regulation householder—Lover of Justice, Constant Reader, Paterfamilias, and all that lot—frizzling on hot gravel?'

'With a blue veil over his head, and his clothes in strips. Has any man here a needle? I've got a piece of sugar-sack.'

'I'll lend you a packing-needle for six square inches of it then. Both my knees are worn through.'

'Why not six square acres, while you're about it? But lend me the needle, and I'll see what I can do with the selvage. I don't think there's enough to protect my royal body from the cold blast as it is. What are you doing with that everlasting sketch-book of yours, Dick?'

'Study of our Special Correspondent repairing his wardrobe,' said Dick gravely, as the other man kicked off a pair of sorely-worn riding-breeches and began to fit a

square of coarse canvas over the most obvious open space. He grunted disconsolately as the vastness of the void developed itself.

'Sugar-bags, indeed! Hi! you pilot-man there! lend me all the sails of that whale-boat.'

A fez-crowned head bobbed up in the stern-sheets, divided itself into exact halves with one flashing grin, and bobbed down again. The man of the tattered breeches, clad only in a Norfolk jacket and a gray flannel shirt, went on with his clumsy sewing, while Dick chuckled over the sketch.

Some twenty whale-boats were nuzzling a sand-bank which was dotted with English soldiery of half a dozen corps, bathing or washing their clothes. A heap of boat-rollers, commissariat-boxes, sugar-bags, and flour- and small-arm-ammunition-cases showed where one of the whale-boats had been compelled to unload hastily; and a regimental carpenter was swearing aloud as he tried, on a wholly insufficient allowance of white lead, to plaster up the sun-parched gaping seams of the boat herself.

'First the bloomin' rudder snaps,' said he to the world in general; 'then the mast goes; an' then, s' 'elp me, when she can't do nothin' else, she opens 'erself out like a cock-eyed Chinese lotus.'

'Exactly the case with my breeches, whoever you are,' said the tailor, without looking up. 'Dick, I wonder when I shall see a decent shop again.'

There was no answer, save the incessant angry murmur of the Nile as it raced round a basalt-walled bend and foamed across a rock-ridge half a mile up-stream. It was as though the brown weight of the river would drive the white men back to their own country. The

indescribable scent of Nile mud in the air told that the stream was falling and that the next few miles would be no light thing for the whale-boats to overpass. The desert ran down almost to the banks, where, among gray, red, and black hillocks, a camel-corps was encamped. No man dared even for a day lose touch of the slow-moving boats; there had been no fighting for weeks past, and throughout all that time the Nile had never spared them. Rapid had followed rapid, rock rock, and island-group island-group, till the rank and file had long since lost all count of direction and very nearly of time. They were moving somewhere, they did not know why, to do something, they did not know what. Before them lay the Nile, and at the other end of it was one Gordon, fighting for the dear life, in a town called Khartoum. There were columns of British troops in the desert, or in one of the many deserts; there were columns on the river; there were yet more columns waiting to embark on the river; there were fresh drafts waiting at Assioot and Assuan; there were lies and rumours running over the face of the hopeless land from Suakin to the Sixth Cataract, and men supposed generally that there must be some one in authority to direct the general scheme of the many movements. The duty of that particular river-column was to keep the whale-boats afloat in the water, to avoid trampling on the villagers' crops when the gangs 'tracked' the boats with lines thrown from midstream, to get as much sleep and food as was possible, and, above all, to press on without delay in the teeth of the churning Nile.

With the soldiers sweated and toiled the correspondents of the newspapers, and they were almost as ignorant as their companions. But it was above all things

necessary that England at breakfast should be amused and thrilled and interested, whether Gordon lived or died, or half the British army went to pieces in the sands. The Soudan campaign was a picturesque one, and lent itself to vivid word-painting. Now and again a 'Special' managed to get slain,—which was not altogether a disadvantage to the paper that employed him,—and more often the hand-to-hand nature of the fighting allowed of miraculous escapes which were worth telegraphing home at eighteenpence the word. There were many correspondents with many corps and columns,—from the veterans who had followed on the heels of the cavalry that occupied Cairo in '82, what time Arabi Pasha called himself king, who had seen the first miserable work round Suakin when the sentries were cut up nightly and the scrub swarmed with spears, to youngsters jerked into the business at the end of a telegraph-wire to take the place of their betters killed or invalided.

Among the seniors—those who knew every shift and change in the perplexing postal arrangements, the value of the seediest, weediest Egyptian garron offered for sale in Cairo or Alexandria, who could talk a telegraph clerk into amiability and soothe the ruffled vanity of a newly-appointed staff-officer when press regulations became burdensome—was the man in the flannel shirt, the black-browed Torpenhow. He represented the Central Southern Syndicate in the campaign, as he had represented it in the Egyptian war, and elsewhere. The syndicate did not concern itself greatly with criticisms of attack and the like. It supplied the masses, and all it demanded was picturesqueness and abundance of detail; for there is more joy in England over a soldier who insubordinately steps out of square to rescue a comrade than over twenty

generals slaving even to baldness at the gross details of transport and commissariat.

He had met at Suakin a young man, sitting on the edge of a recently-abandoned redoubt about the size of a hat-box, sketching a clump of shell-torn bodies on the gravel plain.

'What are you for?' said Torpenhow. The greeting of the correspondent is that of the commercial traveller on the road.

'My own hand,' said the young man, without looking up. 'Have you any tobacco?'

Torpenhow waited till the sketch was finished, and when he had looked at it said, 'What's your business here?'

'Nothing; there was a row, so I came. I'm supposed to be doing something down at the painting-slips among the boats, or else I'm in charge of the condenser on one of the water-ships. I've forgotten which.'

'You've cheek enough to build a redoubt with,' said Torpenhow, and took stock of the new acquaintance. 'Do you always draw like that?'

The young man produced more sketches. 'Row on a Chinese pig-boat,' said he sententiously, showing them one after another.—'Chief mate dirked by a comprador. —Junk ashore off Hakodate.—Somali muleteer being flogged.—Star-shell bursting over camp at Berbera.— Slave-dhow being chased round Tajurrah Bay.—Soldier lying dead in the moonlight outside Suakin,—throat cut by Fuzzies.'

'H'm!' said Torpenhow, 'can't say I care for Verestchagin-and-water myself, but there's no accounting for tastes. Doing anything now, are you?'

'No. I'm amusing myself here.'

Torpenhow looked at the aching desolation of the place. ''Faith, you've queer notions of amusement. 'Got any money?'

'Enough to go on with. Look here: do you want me to do war-work?'

'I don't. My syndicate may, though. You can draw more than a little, and I don't suppose you care much what you get, do you?'

'Not this time. I want my chance first.'

Torpenhow looked at the sketches again, and nodded. 'Yes, you're right to take your first chance when you can get it.'

He rode away swiftly through the Gate of the Two War-Ships, rattled across the causeway into the town, and wired to his syndicate, 'Got man here, picture-work. Good and cheap. Shall I arrange? Will do letterpress with sketches.'

The man on the redoubt sat swinging his legs and murmuring, 'I knew the chance would come, sooner or later. By Gad, they'll have to sweat for it if I come through this business alive!'

In the evening Torpenhow was able to announce to his friend that the Central Southern Agency was willing to take him on trial, paying expenses for three months. 'And, by the way, what's your name?' said Torpenhow.

'Heldar. Do they give me a free hand?'

'They've taken you on chance. You must justify the choice. You'd better stick to me. I'm going up country with a column, and I'll do what I can for you. Give me some of your sketches taken here, and I'll send 'em along.' To himself he said, 'That's the best bargain the Central Southern has ever made; and they got me cheaply enough.'

So it came to pass that, after some purchase of horse-flesh and arrangements financial and political, Dick was made free of the New and Honourable Fraternity of war correspondents, who all possess the inalienable right of doing as much work as they can and getting as much for it as Providence and their owners shall please. To these things are added in time, if the brother be worthy, the power of glib speech that neither man nor woman can resist when a meal or a bed is in question, the eye of a horse-coper, the skill of a cook, the constitution of a bullock, the digestion of an ostrich, and an infinite adaptability to all circumstances. But many die before they attain to this degree, and the past-masters in the craft appear for the most part in dress-clothes when they are in England, and thus their glory is hidden from the multitude.

Dick followed Torpenhow wherever the latter's fancy chose to lead him, and between the two they managed to accomplish some work that almost satisfied themselves. It was not an easy life in any way, and under its influence the two were drawn very closely together, for they ate from the same dish, they shared the same water-bottle, and, most binding tie of all, their mails went off together. It was Dick who managed to make gloriously drunk a telegraph-clerk in a palm hut far beyond the Second Cataract, and, while the man lay in bliss on the floor, possessed himself of some laboriously acquired exclusive information, forwarded by a confiding correspondent of an opposition syndicate, made a careful duplicate of the matter, and brought the result to Torpenhow, who said that all was fair in love or war correspondence, and built an excellent descriptive article from his rival's riotous waste of words. It was Torpenhow who

—but the tale of their adventures, together and apart, from Philæ to the waste wilderness of Herawi and Muella, would fill many books. They had been penned into a square side by side, in deadly fear of being shot by over-excited soldiers; they had fought with baggage-camels in the chill dawn; they had jogged along in silence under blinding sun on indefatigable little Egyptian horses; and they had floundered on the shallows of the Nile when the whale-boat in which they had found a berth chose to hit a hidden rock and rip out half her bottom-planks.

Now they were sitting on the sand-bank, and the whale-boats were bringing up the remainder of the column.

'Yes,' said Torpenhow, as he put the last rude stitches into his over-long-neglected gear, 'it has been a beautiful business.'

'The patch or the campaign?' said Dick. 'Don't think much of either myself.'

'You want the "Eurylas" brought up above the Third Cataract, don't you? and eighty-one-ton guns at Jakdul? Now, I'm quite satisfied with my breeches.' He turned round gravely to exhibit himself, after the manner of a clown.

'It's very pretty. Specially the lettering on the sack. G. B. T. Government Bullock Train. That's a sack from India.'

'It's my initials,—Gilbert Belling Torpenhow. I stole the cloth on purpose. What the mischief are the camel-corps doing yonder?' Torpenhow shaded his eyes and looked across the scrub-strewn gravel.

A bugle blew furiously, and the men on the bank hurried to their arms and accoutrements.

' "Pisan soldiery surprised while bathing," ' remarked Dick calmly. 'D'you remember the picture? It's by

Michael Angelo. All beginners copy it. That scrub's alive with enemy.'

The camel-corps on the bank yelled to the infantry to come to them, and a hoarse shouting down the river showed that the remainder of the column had wind of the trouble and was hastening to take share in it. As swiftly as a reach of still water is crisped by the wind, the rock-strewn ridges and scrub-topped hills were troubled and alive with armed men. Mercifully, it occurred to these to stand far off for a time, to shout and gesticulate joyously. One man even delivered himself of a long story. The camel-corps did not fire. They were only too glad of a little breathing-space, until some sort of square could be formed. The men on the sand-bank ran to their side; and the whale-boats, as they toiled up within shouting distance, were thrust into the nearest bank and emptied of all save the sick and a few men to guard them. The Arab orator ceased his out-cries, and his friends howled.

'They look like the Mahdi's men,' said Torpenhow, elbowing himself into the crush of the square; 'but what thousands of 'em there are! The tribes hereabout aren't against us, I know.'

'Then the Mahdi's taken another town,' said Dick, 'and set all these yelping devils free to chaw us up. Lend us your glass.'

'Our scouts should have told us of this. We've been trapped,' said a subaltern. 'Aren't the camel-guns ever going to begin? Hurry up, you men!'

There was no need for any order. The men flung themselves panting against the sides of the square, for they had good reason to know that whoso was left outside when the fighting began would very probably die

in an extremely unpleasant fashion. The little hundred-and-fifty pound camel-guns posted at one corner of the square opened the ball as the square moved forward by its right to get possession of a knoll of rising ground. All had fought in this manner many times before, and there was no novelty in the entertainment: always the same hot and stifling formation, the smell of dust and leather, the same boltlike rush of the enemy, the same pressure on the weakest side of the square, the few minutes of desperate hand-to-hand scuffle, and then the silence of the desert, broken only by the yells of those whom the handful of cavalry attempted to pursue. They had grown careless. The camel-guns spoke at intervals, and the square slouched forward amid the protests of the camels. Then came the attack of three thousand men who had not learned from books that it is impossible for troops in close order to attack against breech-loading fire. A few dropping shots heralded their approach, and a few horsemen led, but the bulk of the force was naked humanity, mad with rage, and armed with the spear and the sword. The instinct of the desert, where there is always much war, told them that the right flank of the square was the weakest, for they swung clear of the front. The camel-guns shelled them as they passed, and opened for an instant lanes through their midst, most like those quick-closing vistas in a Kentish hop-garden seen when the train races by at full speed; and the infantry fire, held till the opportune moment, dropped them in close-packed hundreds. No civilised troops in the world could have endured the hell through which they came, the living leaping high to avoid the dying who clutched at their heels, the wounded cursing and staggering forward, till they fell—a torrent black as the sliding

water above a mill-dam—full on the right flank of the square. Then the line of the dusty troops and the faint blue desert sky overhead went out in rolling smoke, and the little stones on the heated ground and the tinder-dry clumps of scrub became matters of surpassing interest, for men measured their agonised retreat and recovery by these things, counting mechanically and hewing their way back to chosen pebble and branch. There was no semblance of any concerted fighting. For aught the men knew, the enemy might be attempting all four sides of the square at once. Their business was to destroy what lay in front of them, to bayonet in the back those who passed over them, and, dying, to drag down the slayer till he could be knocked on the head by some avenging gun-butt. Dick waited quietly with Torpenhow and a young doctor till the stress became unendurable. There was no hope of attending to the wounded till the attack was repulsed, so the three moved forward gingerly towards the weakest side. There was a rush from without, the short 'hough-hough' of the stabbing spears, and a man on a horse, followed by thirty or forty others, dashed through, yelling and hacking. The right flank of the square sucked in after them, and the other sides sent help. The wounded, who knew that they had but a few hours more to live, caught at the enemy's feet and brought them down, or, staggering to a discarded rifle, fired blindly into the scuffle that raged in the centre of the square. Dick was conscious that somebody had cut him violently across his helmet, that he had fired his revolver into a black, foam-flecked face which forthwith ceased to bear any resemblance to a face, and that Torpenhow had gone down under an Arab whom he had tried to 'collar low,' and was turning over and over with

his captive, feeling for the man's eyes. The doctor was jabbing at a venture with a bayonet, and a helmetless soldier was firing over Dick's shoulder: the flying grains of powder stung his cheek. It was to Torpenhow that Dick turned by instinct. The representative of the Central Southern Syndicate had shaken himself clear of his enemy, and rose, wiping his thumb on his trousers. The Arab, both hands to his forehead, screamed aloud, then snatched up his spear and rushed at Torpenhow, who was panting under shelter of Dick's revolver. Dick fired twice, and the man dropped limply. His upturned face lacked one eye. The musketry-fire redoubled, but cheers mingled with it. The rush had failed, and the enemy were flying. If the heart of the square were shambles, the ground beyond was a butcher's shop. Dick thrust his way forward between the maddened men. The remnant of the enemy were retiring, as the few—the very few—English cavalry rode down the laggards.

Beyond the lines of the dead, a broad blood-stained Arab spear cast aside in the retreat lay across a stump of scrub, and beyond this again the illimitable dark levels of the desert. The sun caught the steel and turned it into a savage red disc. Some one behind him was saying, 'Ah, get away, you brute!' Dick raised his revolver and pointed towards the desert. His eye was held by the red splash in the distance, and the clamour about him seemed to die down to a very far-away whisper, like the whisper of a level sea. There was the revolver and the red light, . . . and the voice of some one scaring something away, exactly as had fallen somewhere before,—probably in a past life. Dick waited for what should happen afterwards. Something seemed to crack inside his head, and for an instant he stood in the dark,

—a darkness that stung. He fired at random, and the bullet went out across the desert as he muttered, 'Spoilt my aim. There aren't any more cartridges. We shall have to run home.' He put his hand to his head and brought it away covered with blood.

'Old man, you're cut rather badly,' said Torpenhow. 'I owe you something for this business. Thanks. Stand up! I say, you can't be ill here.'

Dick had fallen stiffly on Torpenhow's shoulder, and was muttering something about aiming low and to the left. Then he sank to the ground and was silent. Torpenhow dragged him off to a doctor and sat down to work out an account of what he was pleased to call 'a sanguinary battle, in which our arms had acquitted themselves,' etc.

All that night, when the troops were encamped by the whale-boats, a black figure danced in the strong moonlight on the sand-bar and shouted that Gordon the accursed one was dead,—was dead,—was dead,—that two steamers were rock-staked on the Nile outside the city, and that of all their crews there remained not one; and Gordon was dead,— was dead,— was dead!

But Torpenhow took no heed. He was watching Dick, who was calling aloud to the restless Nile for Maisie,—and again Maisie!

'Behold a phenomenon,' said Torpenhow, rearranging the blanket. 'Here is a man, presumably human, who mentions the name of one woman only. And I've seen a good deal of delirium, too.—Dick, here's some fizzy drink.'

'Thank you, Maisie,' said Dick.

CHAPTER III

So he thinks he shall take to the sea again
For one more cruise with his buccaneers,
To singe the beard of the King of Spain,
And capture another Dean of Jaen
And sell him in Algiers.

'A Dutch Picture.'

THE Soudan campaign and Dick's broken head had been some months ended and mended, and the Central Southern Syndicate had paid Dick a certain sum on account for work done, which work they were careful to assure him was not altogether up to their standard. Dick heaved the letter into the Nile at Cairo, cashed the draft in the same town, and bade a warm farewell to Torpenhow at the station.

'I am going to lie up for a while and rest,' said Torpenhow. I don't know where I shall live in London, but if God brings us to meet, we shall meet. Are you staying here on the off-chance of another row? There will be none till the Southern Soudan is reoccupied by our troops. Mark that. Good-bye; bless you; come back when your money's spent; and give me your address.'

Dick loitered in Cairo, Alexandria, Ismailia, and Port Said,—especially Port Said. There is iniquity in many parts of the world, and vice in all, but the concentrated

essence of all the iniquities and all the vices in all the continents finds itself at Port Said. And through the heart of that sand-bordered hell, where the mirage flickers day long above the Bitter Lakes, move, if you will only wait, most of the men and women you have known in this life. Dick established himself in quarters more riotous than respectable. He spent his evenings on the quay, and boarded many ships, and saw very many friends,—gracious Englishwomen with whom he had talked not too wisely in the veranda of Shepheard's Hotel, hurrying war correspondents, skippers of the contract troop-ships employed in the campaign, army officers by the score, and others of less reputable trades. He had choice of all the races of the East and West for studies, and the advantage of seeing his subjects under the influence of strong excitement at the gaming-tables, saloons, dancing-hells, and elsewhere. For recreation there was the straight vista of the Canal, the blazing sands, the procession of shipping, and the white hospitals where the English soldiers lay. He strove to set down in black and white and colour all that Providence sent him, and when that supply was ended sought about for fresh material. It was a fascinating employment, but it ran away with his money, and he had drawn in advance the hundred and twenty pounds to which he was entitled yearly. 'Now I shall have to work and starve!' thought he, and was addressing himself to this new fate when a mysterious telegram arrived from Torpenhow in England, which said, 'Come back, quick: you have caught on. Come.'

A large smile overspread his face. 'So soon! that's good hearing,' said he to himself. 'There will be an orgie to-night. I'll stand or fall by my luck. 'Faith, it's time it came!' He deposited half of his funds in the

hands of his well-known friends Monsieur and Madame Binat, and ordered himself a Zanzibar dance of the finest. Monsieur Binat was shaking with drink, but Madame smiled sympathetically—

'Monsieur needs a chair, of course, and of course Monsieur will sketch: Monsieur amuses himself strangely.'

Binat raised a blue-white face from a cot in the inner room. 'I understand,' he quavered. 'We all know Monsieur. Monsieur is an artist, as I have been.' Dick nodded. 'In the end,' said Binat, with gravity, 'Monsieur will descend alive into hell, as I have descended.' And he laughed.

'You must come to the dance, too,' said Dick; 'I shall want you.'

'For my face? I knew it would be so. For my face? My God! and for my degradation so tremendous! I will not. Take him away. He is a devil. Or at least do thou. Celeste, demand of him more.' The excellent Binat began to kick and scream.

'All things are for sale in Port Said,' said Madame. 'If my husband comes it will be so much more. Eh, 'ow you call—'alf a sovereign.'

The money was paid, and the mad dance was held at night in a walled courtyard at the back of Madame Binat's house. The lady herself, in faded mauve silk always about to slide from her yellow shoulders, played the piano, and to the tin-pot music of a Western waltz the naked Zanzibari girls danced furiously by the light of kerosene lamps. Binat sat upon a chair and stared with eyes that saw nothing, till the whirl of the dance and the clang of the rattling piano stole into the drink that took the place of blood in his veins, and his face glistened. Dick took him by the chin brutally and

turned that face to the light. Madame Binat looked over her shoulder and smiled with many teeth. Dick leaned against the wall and sketched for an hour, till the kerosene lamps began to smell, and the girls threw themselves panting on the hard-beaten ground. Then he shut his book with a snap and moved away, Binat plucking feebly at his elbow. 'Show me,' he whimpered. 'I too was once an artist, even I!' Dick showed him the rough sketch. 'Am I that?' he screamed. 'Will you take that away with you and show all the world that it is I,—Binat?' He moaned and wept.

'Monsieur has paid for all,' said Madame. 'To the pleasure of seeing Monsieur again.'

The courtyard gate shut, and Dick hurried up the sandy street to the nearest gambling-hell, where he was well known. 'If the luck holds, it's an omen; if I lose, I must stay here.' He placed his money picturesquely about the board, hardly daring to look at what he did. The luck held. Three turns of the wheel left him richer by twenty pounds, and he went down to the shipping to make friends with the captain of a decayed cargo-steamer, who landed him in London with fewer pounds in his pocket than he cared to think about.

A thin gray fog hung over the city, and the streets were very cold; for summer was in England.

'It's a cheerful wilderness, and it hasn't the knack of altering much,' Dick thought, as he tramped from the Docks westward. 'Now, what must I do?'

The packed houses gave no answer. Dick looked down the long lightless streets and at the appalling rush of traffic. 'Oh, you rabbit-hutches!' said he, addressing a row of highly respectable semi-detached residences.

'Do you know what you've got to do later on? You have to supply me with men-servants and maid-servants,'—here he smacked his lips,—'and the peculiar treasure of kings. Meantime I'll get clothes and boots, and presently I will return and trample on you.' He stepped forward energetically; he saw that one of his shoes was burst at the side. As he stooped to make investigations, a man jostled him into the gutter. 'All right,' he said. 'That's another nick in the score. I'll jostle you later on.'

Good clothes and boots are not cheap, and Dick left his last shop with the certainty that he would be respectably arrayed for a time, but with only fifty shillings in his pocket. He returned to streets by the Docks, and lodged himself in one room, where the sheets on the bed were almost audibly marked in case of theft, and where nobody seemed to go to bed at all. When his clothes arrived he sought the Central Southern Syndicate for Torpenhow's address, and got it, with the intimation that there was still some money owing to him.

'How much?' said Dick, as one who habitually dealt in millions.

'Between thirty and forty pounds. If it would be any convenience to you, of course we could let you have it at once; but we usually settle accounts monthly.'

'If I show that I want anything now, I'm lost,' he said to himself. 'All I need I'll take later on.' Then, aloud, 'It's hardly worth while; and I'm going into the country for a month, too. Wait till I come back, and I'll see about it.'

'But we trust, Mr. Heldar, that you do not intend to sever your connection with us?'

Dick's business in life was the study of faces, and he

watched the speaker keenly. 'That man means something,' he said. 'I'll do no business till I've seen Torpenhow. There's a big deal coming.' So he departed, making no promises, to his one little room by the Docks. And that day was the seventh of the month, and that month, he reckoned with awful distinctness, had thirty-one days in it!

It is not easy for a man of catholic tastes and healthy appetites to exist for twenty-four days on fifty shillings. Nor is it cheering to begin the experiment alone in all the loneliness of London. Dick paid seven shillings a week for his lodging, which left him rather less than a shilling a day for food and drink. Naturally, his first purchase was of the materials of his craft; he had been without them too long. Half a day's investigation and comparison brought him to the conclusion that sausages and mashed potatoes, twopence a plate, were the best food. Now, sausages once or twice a week for breakfast are not unpleasant. As lunch, even, with mashed potatoes, they become monotonous. As dinner they are impertinent. At the end of three days Dick loathed sausages, and, going forth, pawned his watch to revel on sheep's head, which is not as cheap as it looks, owing to the bones and the gravy. Then he returned to sausages and mashed potatoes. Then he confined himself entirely to mashed potatoes for a day, and was unhappy because of pain in his inside. Then he pawned his waistcoat and his tie, and thought regretfully of money thrown away in times past. There are few things more edifying unto Art than the actual belly-pinch of hunger, and Dick in his few walks abroad—he did not care for exercise, it raised desires that could not be satisfied—found himself dividing mankind into two classes,—those

who looked as if they might give him something to eat, and those who looked otherwise. 'I never knew what I had to learn about the human face before,' he thought; and, as a reward for his humility, Providence caused a cab-driver at a sausage-shop where Dick fed that night to leave half eaten a great chunk of bread. Dick took it,—would have fought all the world for its possession,—and it cheered him.

The month dragged through at last, and, nearly prancing with impatience, he went to draw his money. Then he hastened to Torpenhow's address and smelt the smell of cooking meats all along the corridors of the chambers. Torpenhow was on the top floor, and Dick burst into his room, to be received with a hug which nearly cracked his ribs, as Torpenhow dragged him to the light and spoke of twenty different things in the same breath.

'But you're looking tucked up,' he concluded.

'Got anything to eat?' said Dick, his eye roaming round the room.

'I shall be having breakfast in a minute. What do you say to sausages?'

'No, anything but sausages! Torp, I've been starving on that accursed horse-flesh for thirty days and thirty nights.'

'Now, what lunacy has been your latest?'

Dick spoke of the last few weeks with unbridled speech. Then he opened his coat; there was no waistcoat below. 'I ran it fine, awfully fine, but I've just scraped through.'

'You haven't much sense, but you've got a backbone anyhow. Eat, and talk afterwards.' Dick fell upon eggs and bacon and gorged till he could gorge no more. Torpenhow handed him a filled pipe, and he smoked as men

smoke who for three weeks have been deprived of good tobacco.

'Ouf!' said he. 'That's heavenly! Well?'

'Why in the world didn't you come to me?'

'Couldn't; I owe you too much already, old man. Besides, I had a sort of superstition that this temporary starvation—that's what it was, and it hurt—would bring me more luck later. It's over and done with now, and none of the Syndicate know how hard up I was. Fire away. What's the exact state of affairs as regards myself?'

'You had my wire? You've caught on here. People like your work immensely. I don't know why, but they do. They say you have a fresh touch and a new way of drawing things. And, because they're chiefly home-bred English, they say you have insight. You're wanted by half a dozen papers; you're wanted to illustrate books.'

Dick grunted scornfully.

'You're wanted to work up your smaller sketches and sell them to the dealers. They seem to think the money sunk in you is a good investment. Good Lord! who can account for the fathomless folly of the public?'

'They're a remarkably sensible people.'

'They are subject to fits, if that's what you mean; and you happen to be the object of the latest fit among those who are interested in what they call Art. Just now you're a fashion, a phenomenon, or whatever you please. I appeared to be the only person who knew anything about you here, and I have been showing the most useful men a few of the sketches you gave me from time to time. Those coming after your work on the Central Southern Syndicate appear to have done your business. You're in luck.'

'Huh! call it luck! Do call it luck, when a man has been kicking about the world like a dog, waiting for it to come! I'll luck 'em later on. I want a place to work in first.'

'Come here,' said Torpenhow, crossing the landing. 'This place is a big box room really, but it will do for you. There's your skylight, or your north light, or whatever window you call it, and plenty of room to thrash about in, and a bedroom beyond. What more do you need?'

'Good enough,' said Dick, looking round the large room that took up a third of a top story in the rickety chambers overlooking the Thames. A pale yellow sun shone through the skylight and showed the much dirt of the place. Three steps led from the door to the landing, and three more to Torpenhow's room. The well of the staircase disappeared into darkness, pricked by tiny gas-jets, and there were sounds of men talking, and doors slamming seven flights below, in the warm gloom.

'Do they give you a free hand here?' said Dick cautiously. He was Ishmael enough to know the value of liberty.

'Anything you like: latch-keys and license unlimited. We are permanent tenants for the most part here. 'Tisn't a place I would recommend for a Young Men's Christian Association, but it will serve. I took these rooms for you when I wired.'

'You're a great deal too kind, old man.'

'You didn't suppose you were going away from me, did you?' Torpenhow put his hand on Dick's shoulder, and the two walked up and down the room, henceforward to be called the studio, in sweet and silent communion. They heard rapping at Torpenhow's door. 'That's some ruffian come up for a drink,' said Torpen-

how; and he raised his voice cheerily. There entered no one more ruffianly than a portly middle-aged gentleman in a satin-faced frockcoat. His lips were parted and pale, and there were deep pouches under the eyes.

'Weak heart,' said Dick to himself, and, as he shook hands, 'very weak heart. His pulse is shaking his fingers.'

The man introduced himself as the head of the Central Southern Syndicate and 'one of the most ardent admirers of your work, Mr. Heldar. I assure you, in the name of the syndicate, that we are immensely indebted to you; and I trust, Mr. Heldar, you won't forget that we were largely instrumental in bringing you before the public.' He panted because of the seven flights of stairs.

Dick glanced at Torpenhow, whose left eyelid lay for a moment dead on his cheek.

'I shan't forget,' said Dick, every instinct of defence roused in him. 'You've paid me so well that I couldn't, you know. By the way, when I am settled in this place I should like to send and get my sketches. There must be nearly a hundred and fifty of them with you.'

'That is er—is what I came to speak about. I fear we can't allow it exactly, Mr. Heldar. In the absence of any specified agreement the sketches are our property, of course.'

'Do you mean to say that you are going to keep them?'

'Yes; and we hope to have your help, on your own terms, Mr. Heldar, to assist us in arranging a little exhibition, which, backed by our name and the influence we naturally command among the press, should be of material service to you. Sketches such as yours—'

'Belong to me. You engaged me by wire, you paid

me the lowest rates you dared. You can't mean to keep them! Good God alive, man, they're all I've got in the world!'

Torpenhow watched Dick's face and whistled.

Dick walked up and down, thinking. He saw the whole of his little stock in trade, the first weapon of his equipment, annexed at the outset of his campaign by an elderly gentleman whose name Dick had not caught aright, who said that he represented a syndicate, which was a thing for which Dick had not the least reverence. The injustice of the proceedings did not much move him; he had seen the strong hand prevail too often in other places to be squeamish over the moral aspects of right and wrong. But he ardently desired the blood of the gentleman in the frockcoat, and when he spoke again it was with a strained sweetness that Torpenhow knew well for the beginning of strife.

'Forgive me, sir, but you have no—no younger man who can arrange this business with me?'

'I speak for the syndicate. I see no reason for a third party to—'

'You will in a minute. Be good enough to give back my sketches.'

The man stared blankly at Dick, and then at Torpenhow, who was leaning against the wall. He was not used to ex-employees who ordered him to be good enough to do things.

'Yes, it is rather a cold-blooded steal,' said Torpenhow critically; 'but I'm afraid, I am very much afraid, you've struck the wrong man. Be careful, Dick: remember, this isn't the Soudan.'

'Considering what services the syndicate have done you in putting your name before the world—'

This was not a fortunate remark; it reminded Dick of certain vagrant years lived out in loneliness and strife and unsatisfied desires. The memory did not contrast well with the prosperous gentleman who proposed to enjoy the fruit of those years.

'I don't know quite what to do with you,' began Dick meditatively. 'Of course, you're a thief, and you ought to be half killed, but in your case you'd probably die. I don't want you dead on this floor, and, besides, it's unlucky just as one's moving in. Don't hit, sir; you'll only excite yourself.' He put one hand on the man's forearm and ran the other down the plump body beneath the coat. 'My goodness!' said he to Torpenhow, 'and this gray beast dares to be a thief! I have seen an Esneh camel-driver have the black hide taken off his body in strips for stealing half a pound of wet dates, and he was as tough as whipcord. This thing's soft all over —like a woman.'

There are few things more poignantly humiliating than being handled by a man who does not intend to strike. The head of the syndicate began to breathe heavily. Dick walked round him, pawing him, as a cat paws a soft hearth-rug. Then he traced with his forefinger the leaden pouches underneath the eyes, and shook his head. 'You were going to steal my things,—mine, mine, mine!—you, who don't know when you may die. Write a note to your office,—you say you're the head of it,—and order them to give Torpenhow my sketches,—every one of them. Wait a minute: your hand's shaking. Now!' He thrust a pocket-book before him. The note was written. Torpenhow took it and departed without a word, while Dick walked round and round the spellbound captive, giving him such ad-

vice as he conceived best for the welfare of his soul. When Torpenhow returned with a gigantic portfolio, he heard Dick say, almost soothingly, 'Now, I hope this will be a lesson to you; and if you worry me when I have settled down to work with any nonsense about actions for assault, believe me, I'll catch you and manhandle you, and you'll die. You haven't very long to live, anyhow. Go! Imshi! Bootsak!—Get out!' The man departed, staggering and dazed. Dick drew a long breath: 'Phew! what a lawless lot these people are! The first thing a poor orphan meets is gang robbery, organised burglary! Think of the hideous blackness of that man's mind! Are my sketches all right, Torp?'

'Yes; one hundred and forty-seven of them. Well, I must say, Dick, you've begun well.'

'He was interfering with me. It only meant a few pounds to him, but it was everything to me. I don't think he'll bring an action. I gave him some medical advice gratis about the state of his body. It was cheap at the little flurry it cost him. Now, let's look at my things.'

Two minutes later Dick had thrown himself down on the floor and was deep in the portfolio, chuckling lovingly as he turned the drawings over and thought of the price at which they had been bought.

The afternoon was well advanced when Torpenhow came to the door and saw Dick dancing a wild saraband under the skylight.

'I builded better than I knew, Torp,' he said, without stopping the dance. 'They're good! They're damned good! They'll go like flame! I shall have an exhibition of them on my own brazen hook. And that man would have cheated me out of it! Do you know that I'm sorry now that I didn't actually hit him?'

'Go out,' said Torpenhow,—'go out and pray to be delivered from the sin of arrogance, which you never will be. Bring your things up from whatever place you're staying in, and we'll try to make this barn a little more shipshape.'

'And then—oh, then,' said Dick, still capering, 'we will spoil the Egyptians!'

CHAPTER IV

The wolf-cub at even lay hid in the corn,
When the smoke of the cooking hung gray:
He knew where the doe made a couch for her fawn,
And he looked to his strength for his prey.
But the moon swept the smoke-wreaths away.
And he turned from his meal in the villager's close,
And he bayed to the moon as she rose.

'In Seonee.'

'WELL, and how does success taste?' said Torpenhow, some three months later. He had just returned to chambers after a holiday in the country.

'Good,' said Dick, as he sat licking his lips before the easel in the studio. 'I want more,—heaps more. The lean years have passed, and I approve of these fat ones.'

'Be careful, old man. That way lies bad work.'

Torpenhow was sprawling in a long chair with a small fox-terrier asleep on his chest, while Dick was preparing a canvas. A dais, a background, and a lay-figure were the only fixed objects in the place. They rose from a wreck of oddments that began with felt-covered water-bottles, belts, and regimental badges, and ended with a small bale of second-hand uniforms and a stand of mixed arms. The mark of muddy feet on the dais showed that

a military model had just gone away. The watery autumn sunlight was failing, and shadows sat in the corners of the studio.

'Yes,' said Dick deliberately, 'I like the power; I like the fun; I like the fuss; and above all I like the money. I almost like the people who make the fuss and pay the money. Almost. But they're a queer gang,—an amazingly queer gang!'

'They have been good enough to you, at any rate. That tin-pot exhibition of your sketches must have paid. Did you see that the papers called it the "Wild Work Show"?'

'Never mind. I sold every shred of canvas I wanted to; and, on my word, I believe it was because they believed I was a self-taught flagstone artist. I should have got better prices if I had worked my things on wool or scratched them on camel-bone instead of using mere black and white and colour. They are a queer gang, these people. Limited isn't the word to describe 'em. I met a fellow the other day who told me that it was impossible that shadows on white sand should be blue,—ultramarine,—as they are. I found out, later, that that man had been as far as Brighton beach; but he knew all about Art, confound him. He gave me a lecture on it, and recommended me to go to school to learn technique. I wonder what old Kami would have said to that.'

'When were you under Kami, man of extraordinary beginnings?'

'I studied with him for two years in Paris. He taught by personal magnetism. All he ever said was, "Continuez, mes enfants," and you had to make the best you could of that. He had a divine touch, and he knew something about colour. Kami used to dream colour.

I swear he could never have seen the genuine article; but he evolved it, and it was good.'

'Recollect some of those views in the Soudan?' said Torpenhow, with a provoking drawl.

Dick squirmed in his place. 'Don't! It makes me want to get out there again. What colour that was! Opal and umber and amber and claret and brick-red and sulphur—cockatoo-crest sulphur—against brown, with a nigger-black rock sticking up in the middle of it all, and a decorative frieze of camels festooning in front of a pure pale turquoise sky.' He began to walk up and down. 'And yet, you know, if you try to give these people the thing as God gave it keyed down to their comprehension and according to the powers He has given you—'

'Modest man! Go on.'

'Half a dozen epicene young pagans who haven't even been to Algiers will tell you, first, that your notion is borrowed, and, secondly, that it isn't Art.'

'This comes of my leaving town for a month. Dickie, you've been promenading among the toy-shops and hearing people talk.'

'I couldn't help it,' said Dick penitently. 'You weren't here, and it was lonely these long evenings. A man can't work for ever.'

'A man might have gone to a pub, and got decently drunk.'

'I wish I had; but I forgathered with some men of sorts. They said they were artists, and I knew some of them could draw,—but they wouldn't draw. They gave me tea,—tea at five in the afternoon!—and talked about Art and the state of their souls. As if their souls mattered. I've heard more about Art and seen less of her

in the last six months than in the whole of my life. Do you remember Cassavetti, who worked for some continental syndicate, out with the desert column? He was a regular Christmas-tree of contraptions when he took the field in full fig, with his water-bottle, lanyard, revolver, writing-case, housewife, gig-lamps, and the Lord knows what all. He used to fiddle about with 'em and show us how they worked; but he never seemed to do much except fudge his reports from the Nilghai. See?'

'Dear old Nilghai! He's in town, fatter than ever. He ought to be up here this evening. I see the comparison perfectly. You should have kept clear of all that man-millinery. Serves you right; and I hope it will unsettle your mind.'

'It won't. It has taught me what Art—holy sacred Art—means.'

'You've learnt something while I've been away. What is Art?'

'Give 'em what they know, and when you've done it once do it again.' Dick dragged forward a canvas laid face to the wall. 'Here's a sample of real Art. It's going to be a facsimile reproduction for a weekly. I called it "His Last Shot." It's worked up from the little water-colour I made outside El Maghrib. Well, I lured my model, a beautiful rifleman, up here with drink. I drored him, and I redrored him, and I tredrored him, and I made him a flushed, dishevelled, bedevilled scallawag, with his helmet at the back of his head, and the living fear of death in his eye, and the blood oozing out of a cut over his ankle-bone. He wasn't pretty, but he was all soldier and very much man.'

'Once more, modest child!'

Dick laughed. 'Well, it's only to you I'm talking. I

did him just as well as I knew how, making allowance for the slickness of oils. Then the art-manager of that abandoned paper said that his subscribers wouldn't like it. It was brutal and coarse and violent,—man being naturally gentle when he's fighting for his life. They wanted something more restful, with a little more colour. I could have said a good deal, but you might as well talk to a sheep as an art-manager. I took my "Last Shot" back. Behold the result! I put him into a lovely red coat without a speck on it. That is Art. I polished his boots,—observe the high light on the toe. That is Art. I cleaned his rifle,—rifles are always clean on service,—because that is Art. I pipeclayed his helmet,—pipeclay is always used on active service, and is indispensable to Art. I shaved his chin, I washed his hands, and gave him an air of fatted peace. Result, military tailor's pattern-plate. Price, thank Heaven, twice as much as for the first sketch, which was moderately decent.'

'And do you suppose you're going to give that thing out as your work?'

'Why not? I did it. Alone I did it, in the interests of sacred, home-bred Art and "Dickenson's Weekly." '

Torpenhow smoked in silence for a while. Then came the verdict, delivered from rolling clouds: 'If you were only a mass of blathering vanity, Dick, I wouldn't mind,—I'd let you go to the deuce on your own mahl-stick; but when I consider what you are to me, and when I find that to vanity you add the twopenny-halfpenny pique of a twelve-year-old girl, then I bestir myself in your behalf. Thus!'

The canvas ripped as Torpenhow's booted foot shot through it, and the terrier jumped down, thinking rats were about.

'If you have any bad language to use, use it. You have not. I continue. You are an idiot, because no man born of woman is strong enough to take liberties with his public, even though they be—which they ain't —all you say they are.'

'But they don't know any better. What can you expect from creatures born and bred in this light?' Dick pointed to the yellow fog. 'If they want furniture-polish, let them have furniture-polish, so long as they pay for it. They are only men and women. You talk as though they were gods.'

'That sounds very fine, but it has nothing to do with the case. They are the people you have to work for, whether you like it or not. They are your masters. Don't be deceived, Dickie; you aren't strong enough to trifle with them,—or with yourself, which is more important. Moreover,—Come back, Binkie: that red daub isn't going anywhere,—unless you take precious good care you will fall under the damnation of the cheque-book, and that's worse than death. You will get drunk—you're half drunk already—on easily-acquired money. For that money and your own infernal vanity you are willing to deliberately turn out bad work. You'll do quite enough bad work without knowing it. And, Dickie, as I love you and as I know you love me, I am not going to let you cut off your nose to spite your face for all the gold in England. That's settled. Now swear.'

'Don't know,' said Dick. 'I've been trying to make myself angry, but I can't, you're so abominably reasonable. There will be a row on "Dickenson's Weekly," I fancy.'

'Why the Dickenson do you want to work on a weekly paper? It's slow bleeding of power.'

'It brings in the very desirable dollars,' said Dick, his hands in his pockets.

Torpenhow watched him with large contempt. 'Why, I thought it was a man!' said he. 'It's a child.'

'No, it isn't,' said Dick, wheeling quickly. 'You've no notion what the certainty of cash means to a man who has always wanted it badly. Nothing will pay me for some of my life's joys; on that Chinese pig-boat, for instance, when we ate bread and jam for every meal, because Ho-Wang wouldn't allow us anything better, and it all tasted of pig,—Chinese pig. I've worked for this, I've sweated and I've starved for this, line on line and month after month. And now I've got it I am going to make the most of it while it lasts. Let them pay—they've no knowledge.'

'What does Your Majesty please to want? You can't smoke more than you do; you won't drink; you're a gross feeder; and you dress in the dark, by the look of you. You wouldn't keep a horse the other day when I suggested, because, you said, it might fall lame, and whenever you cross the street you take a hansom. Even you are not foolish enough to suppose that theatres and all the live things you can buy thereabouts mean Life. What earthly need have you for money?'

'It's there, bless its golden heart,' said Dick. 'It's there all the time. Providence has sent me nuts while I have teeth to crack 'em with. I haven't yet found the nut I wish to crack, but I'm keeping my teeth filed. Perhaps some day you and I will go for a walk round the wide earth.'

'With no work to do, nobody to worry us, and nobody to compete with? You would be unfit to speak to in a week. Besides, I shouldn't go. I don't care to profit

by the price of a man's soul,—for that's what it would mean. Dick, it's no use arguing. You're a fool.'

'Don't see it. When I was on that Chinese pig-boat our captain got enormous credit for saving about twenty-five thousand very sea-sick little pigs, when our old tramp of a steamer fell foul of a timber-junk. Now, taking those pigs as a parallel—'

'Oh, confound your parallels! Whenever I try to improve your soul you always drag in some irrelevant anecdote from your shady past. Pigs aren't the British public; credit on the high seas isn't credit here; and self-respect is self-respect all the world over. Go out for a walk and try to catch some self-respect. And I say, if the Nilghai comes up this evening can I show him your diggings?'

'Surely. You'll be asking whether you must knock at my door, next.' And Dick departed, to take counsel with himself in the rapidly-gathering London fog.

Half an hour after he had left the Nilghai laboured up the staircase. He was the chiefest, as he was the hugest, of the war correspondents, and his experiences dated from the birth of the needle-gun. Saving only his ally, Keneu the Great War Eagle, there was no man mightier in the craft than he, and he always opened his conversation with the news that there would be trouble in the Balkans in the spring. Torpenhow laughed as he entered.

'Never mind the trouble in the Balkans. Those little states are always screeching. You've heard about Dick's luck?'

'Yes; he has been called up to notoriety, hasn't he? I hope you keep him properly humble. He wants suppressing from time to time.'

'He does. He's beginning to take liberties with what he thinks is his reputation.'

'Already! By Jove, he has cheek! I don't know about his reputation, but he'll come a cropper if he tries that sort of thing.'

'So I told him. I don't think he believes it.'

'They never do when they first start off. What's that wreck on the ground there?'

'Specimen of his latest impertinence.' Torpenhow thrust the torn edges of the canvas together and showed the well-groomed picture to the Nilghai, who looked at it for a moment and whistled.

'It's a chromo,' said he,—'a chromo-litholeo-margarine fake! What possessed him to do it? And yet how thoroughly he has caught the note that catches a public who think with their boots and read with their elbows! The cold-blooded insolence of the work almost saves it; but he mustn't go on with this. Hasn't he been praised and cockered up too much? You know these people here have no sense of proportion. They'll call him a second Detaille and a third-hand Meissonier while his fashion lasts. It's windy diet for a colt.'

'I don't think it affects Dick much. You might as well call a young wolf a lion and expect him to take the compliment in exchange for a shin-bone. Dick's soul is in the bank. He's working for cash.'

'Now he has thrown up war work, I suppose he doesn't see that the obligations of the service are just the same, only the proprietors are changed.'

'How should he know? He thinks he is his own master.'

'Does he? I could undeceive him for his good if there's any virtue in print. He wants the whip-lash.'

'Lay it on with science, then. I'd flay him myself, but I like him too much.'

'I've no scruples. He had the audacity to try to cut me out with a woman at Cairo once. I forgot that, but I remember now.'

'Did he cut you out?'

'You'll see when I have dealt with him. But, after all, what's the good? Leave him alone and he'll come home, if he has any stuff in him, dragging or wagging his tail behind him. There's more in a week of life than in a lively weekly. None the less I'll slate him. I'll slate him ponderously in the "Cataclysm." '

'Good luck to you; but I fancy nothing short of a crowbar would make Dick wince. His soul seems to have been fired before we came across him. He's intensely suspicious and utterly lawless.'

'Matter of temper,' said the Nilghai. 'It's the same with horses. Some you wallop and they work, some you wallop and they jib, and some you wallop and they go out for a walk with their hands in their pockets.'

'That's exactly what Dick has done,' said Torpenhow. 'Wait till he comes back. In the meantime you can begin your slating here. I'll show you some of his last and worst work in his studio.'

Dick had instinctively sought running water for a comfort to his mood of mind. He was leaning over the Embankment wall, watching the rush of the Thames, through the arches of Westminster Bridge. He began by thinking of Torpenhow's advice, but, as of custom, lost himself in the study of the faces flocking past. Some had death written on their features, and Dick marvelled that they could laugh. Others, clumsy and coarse-built for the most part, were alight with love;

others were merely drawn and lined with work; but there was something, Dick knew, to be made out of them all. The poor at least should suffer that he might learn, and the rich should pay for the output of his learning. Thus his credit in the world and his cash balance at the bank would be increased. So much the better for him. He had suffered. Now he would take toll of the ills of others.

The fog was driven apart for a moment, and the sun shone, a blood-red wafer, on the water. Dick watched the spot till he heard the voice of the tide between the piers die down like the wash of the sea at low tide. A girl hard pressed by her lover shouted shamelessly, 'Ah, get away, you beast!' and a shift of the same wind that had opened the fog drove across Dick's face the black smoke of a river-steamer at her berth below the wall. He was blinded for the moment, then spun round and found himself face to face with—Maisie.

There was no mistaking. The years had turned the child to a woman, but they had not altered the dark-gray eyes, the thin scarlet lips, or the firmly-modelled mouth and chin; and, that all should be as it was of old, she wore a closely-fitting gray dress.

Since the human soul is finite and not in the least under its own command, Dick, advancing, said, 'Halloo!' after the manner of schoolboys, and Maisie answered, 'Oh, Dick, is that you?' Then against his will, and before the brain, newly released from considerations of the cash balance, had time to dictate to the nerves, every pulse of Dick's body throbbed furiously and his palate dried in his mouth. The fog shut down again, and Maisie's face was pearl-white through it. No word was spoken, but Dick fell into step at her side, and the two paced the Embankment together, keeping the step as

perfectly as in their afternoon excursions to the mud-flats. Then Dick, a little hoarsely—

'What has happened to Amomma?'

'He died, Dick. Not cartridges; over-eating. He was always greedy. Isn't it funny?'

'Yes. No. Do you mean Amomma?'

'Ye—es. No. This. Where have you come from?'

'Over there.' He pointed eastward through the fog. 'And you?'

'Oh, I'm in the north,—the black north, across all the Park. I am very busy.'

'What do you do?'

'I paint a great deal. That's all I have to do.'

'Why, what's happened? You had three hundred a year.'

'I have that still. I am painting; that's all.'

'Are you alone, then?'

'There's a girl living with me. Don't walk so fast, Dick; you're out of step.'

'Then you noticed it too?'

'Of course I did. You're always out of step.'

'So I am. I'm sorry. You went on with the painting?'

'Of course. I said I should. I was at the Slade, then at Merton's in St. John's Wood, the big studio, then I pepper-potted,—I mean I went to the National,—and now I'm working under Kami.'

'But Kami is in Paris surely?'

'No; he has his teaching studio at Vitry-sur-Marne. I work with him in the summer, and I live in London in the winter. I'm a householder.'

'Do you sell much?'

'Now and again, but not often. There is my 'bus, I must take it or lose half an hour. Good-bye, Dick.'

'Good-bye, Maisie. Won't you tell me where you live? I must see you again; and perhaps I could help you. I —I paint a little myself.'

'I may be in the Park to-morrow if there is no working light. I walk from the Marble Arch down and back again; that is my little excursion. But of course I shall see you again.' She stepped into the omnibus and was swallowed up by the fog.

'Well—I—am—damned!' exclaimed Dick, and returned to the chambers.

Torpenhow and the Nilghai found him sitting on the steps to the studio door, repeating the phrase with an awful gravity.

'You'll be more damned when I've done with you,' said the Nilghai, upheaving his bulk from behind Torpenhow's shoulder and waving a sheaf of half-dry manuscript. 'Dick, it is of common report that you are suffering from swelled head.'

'Halloo, Nilghai. Back again? How are the Balkans and all the little Balkans? One side of your face is out of drawing, as usual.'

'Never mind that. I am commissioned to smite you in print. Torpenhow refuses from false delicacy. I've been overhauling the pot-boilers in your studio. They are simply disgraceful.'

'Oho! that's it, is it? If you think you can slate me, you're wrong. You can only describe, and you need as much room to turn in, on paper, as a P. and O. cargo-boat. But continue, and be swift. I'm going to bed.'

'H'm! h'm! h'm! The first part only deals with your pictures. Here's the peroration: "For work done without conviction, for power wasted on trivialities, for labour expended with levity for the deliberate pur-

pose of winning the easy applause of a fashion-driven public—"'

'That's "His Last Shot," second edition. Go on.'

'—"public, there remains but one end,—the oblivion that is preceded by toleration and cenotaphed with contempt. From that fate Mr. Heldar has yet to prove himself out of danger." '

'Wow—wow—wow—wow—wow!' said Dick profanely. 'It's a clumsy ending and vile journalese, but it's quite true. And yet,'—he sprang to his feet and snatched at the manuscript,—'you scarred, deboshed, battered old gladiator! you're sent out when a war begins, to minister to the blind, brutal, British public's bestial thirst for blood. They have no arenas now, but they must have special correspondents. You're a fat gladiator who comes up through a trap-door and talks of what he's seen. You stand on precisely the same level as an energetic bishop, an affable actress, a devastating cyclone, or—mine own sweet self. And you presume to lecture me about my work! Nilghai, if it were worth while I'd caricature you in four papers!'

The Nilghai winced. He had not thought of this.

'As it is, I shall take this stuff and tear it small—so!' The manuscript fluttered in slips down the dark well of the staircase. 'Go home, Nilghai,' said Dick; 'go home to your lonely little bed, and leave me in peace. I am about to turn in till to-morrow.'

'Why, it isn't seven yet!' said Torpenhow, with amazement.

'It shall be two in the morning, if I choose,' said Dick, backing to the studio door. 'I go to grapple with a serious crisis, and I shan't want any dinner.'

The door shut and was locked.

'What can you do with a man like that?' said the Nilghai.

'Leave him alone. He's as mad as a hatter.'

At eleven there was kicking on the studio door. 'Is the Nilghai with you still?' said a voice from within. 'Then tell him he might have condensed the whole of his lumbering nonsense into an epigram: "Only the free are bond, and only the bond are free." Tell him he's one idiot, Torp, and tell him I'm another.'

'All right. Come out and have supper. You're smoking on an empty stomach.'

There was no answer.

CHAPTER V

'I have a thousand men,' said he,
'To wait upon my will,
And towers nine upon the Tyne,
And three upon the Till.'

'And what care I for your men,' said she,
'Or towers from Tyne to Till,
Sith you must go with me,' she said,
'To wait upon my will?'
'Sir Hoggie and the Fairies.'

NEXT morning Torpenhow found Dick sunk in deepest repose of tobacco.

'Well, madman, how d'you feel?'

'I don't know. I'm trying to find out.'

'You had much better do some work.'

'Maybe; but I'm in no hurry. I've made a discovery. Torp, there's too much Ego in my Cosmos.'

'Not really! Is this revelation due to my lectures, or the Nilghai's?'

'It came to me suddenly, all on my own account. Much too much Ego; and now I'm going to work.'

He turned over a few half-finished sketches, drummed on a new canvas, cleaned three brushes, set Binkie to bite the toes of the lay-figure, rattled through his collec-

tion of arms and accoutrements, and then went out abruptly, declaring that he had done enough for the day.

'This is positively indecent,' said Torpenhow, 'and the first time that Dick has ever broken up a light morning. Perhaps he has found out that he has a soul, or an artistic temperament, or something equally valuable. That comes of leaving him alone for a month. Perhaps he has been going out of evenings. I must look to this.' He rang for the bald-headed old housekeeper, whom nothing could astonish or annoy.

'Beeton, did Mr. Heldar dine out at all while I was out of town?'

'Never laid 'is dress-clothes out once, sir, all the time. Mostly 'e dined in; but 'e brought some most remarkable fancy young gentlemen up 'er after theatres once or twice. Remarkable fancy they was. You gentlemen on the top floor does very much as you likes, but it do seem to me, sir, droppin' a walkin'-stick down five flights o' stairs an' then goin' down four abreast to pick it up again at half-past two in the mornin', singin', "Bring back the whisky, Willie darlin',"—not once or twice, but scores o' times,—isn't charity to the other tenants. What I say is, "Do as you would be done by." That's my motto.'

'Of course! of course! I'm afraid the top floor isn't the quietest in the house.'

'I make no complaints, sir. I have spoke to Mr. Heldar friendly, an' he laughed, an' did me a picture of the missis that is as good as a coloured print. It 'asn't the 'igh shine of a photograph, but what I say is, "Never look a gift-horse in the mouth." Mr. Heldar's dress-clothes 'aven't been on him for weeks.'

'Then it's all right,' said Torpenhow to himself. 'Or-

gies are healthy, and Dick has a head of his own, but when it comes to women making eyes I'm not so certain. —Binkie, never you be a man, little dorglums. They're contrary brutes, and they do things without any reason.'

Dick had turned northward across the Park, but he was walking in the spirit on the mud-flats with Maisie. He laughed aloud as he remembered the day when he had decked Amomma's horns with the ham-frills, and Maisie, white with rage, had cuffed him. How long those four years seemed in review, and how closely Maisie was connected with every hour of them! Storm across the sea, and Maisie in a gray dress on the beach, sweeping her drenched hair out of her eyes and laughing at the homeward race of the fishing-smacks; hot sunshine on the mud-flats, and Maisie sniffing scornfully, with her chin in the air; Maisie flying before the wind that threshed the foreshore and drove the sand like small shot about her ears; Maisie, very composed and independent, telling lies to Mrs. Jennett while Dick supported her with coarser perjuries; Maisie picking her way delicately from stone to stone, a pistol in her hand and her teeth firm-set; and Maisie in a gray dress sitting on the grass between the mouth of a cannon and a nodding yellow sea-poppy. The pictures passed before him one by one, and the last stayed the longest. Dick was perfectly happy with a quiet peace that was as new to his mind as it was foreign to his experience. It never occurred to him that there might be other calls upon his time than loafing across the Park in the forenoon.

'There's a good working light now,' he said, watching his shadow placidly. 'Some poor devil ought to be grateful for this. And there's Maisie!'

She was walking towards him from the Marble Arch,

and he saw that no mannerism of her gait had been changed. It was good to find her still Maisie, and, so to speak, his next-door neighbour. No greeting passed between them, because there had been none in the old days.

'What are you doing out of your studio at this hour?' said Dick, as one who was entitled to ask.

'Idling. Just idling. I got angry with a chin and scraped it out. Then I left it in a little heap of paint-chips and came away.'

'I know what palette-knifing means. What was the piccy?'

'A fancy head that wouldn't come right,—horrid thing!'

'I don't like working over scraped paint when I'm doing flesh. The grain comes up woolly as the paint dries.'

'Not if you scrape properly.' Maisie waved her hand to illustrate her methods. There was a dab of paint on the white cuff. Dick laughed.

'You're as untidy as ever.'

'That comes well from you. Look at your own cuff.'

'By Jove, yes! It's worse than yours. I don't think we've much altered in anything. Let's see, though.' He looked at Maisie critically. The pale blue haze of an autumn day crept between the tree-trunks of the Park and made a background for the gray dress, the black velvet toque above the black hair, and the resolute profile.

'No, there's nothing changed. How good it is! D'you remember when I fastened your hair into the snap of a handbag?'

Maisie nodded, with a twinkle in her eyes, and turned her full face to Dick.

'Wait a minute,' said he. 'That mouth is down at the corners a little. Who's been worrying you, Maisie?'

'No one but myself. I never seem to get on with my work, and yet I try hard enough, and Kami says—'

' "Continuez, mesdemoiselles. Continuez toujours, mes enfants." Kami is depressing. I beg your pardon.'

'Yes, that's what he says. He told me last summer that I was doing better and he'd let me exhibit this year.'

'Not in this place, surely?'

'Of course not. The Salon.'

'You fly high.'

'I've been beating my wings long enough. Where do you exhibit, Dick?'

'I don't exhibit. I sell.'

'What is your line, then?'

'Haven't you heard?' Dick's eyes opened. Was this thing possible? He cast about for some means of conviction. They were not far from the Marble Arch. 'Come up Oxford Street a little and I'll show you.'

A small knot of people stood round a print-shop that Dick knew well. 'Some reproduction of my work inside,' he said, with suppressed triumph. Never before had success tasted so sweet upon the tongue. 'You see the sort of things I paint. D'you like it?'

Maisie looked at the wild whirling rush of a field-battery going into action under fire. Two artillerymen stood behind her in the crowd.

'They've chucked the off lead-'orse,' said one to the other. ''E's tore up awful, but they're makin' good time with the others. That lead-driver drives better nor you, Tom. See 'ow cunnin' e's nursin' 'is 'orse.'

'Number Three'll be off the limber, next jolt,' was the answer.

'No, 'e won't. See 'ow 'is foot's braced against the iron? 'E's all right.'

Dick watched Maisie's face and swelled with joy—fine, rank, vulgar triumph. She was more interested in the little crowd than in the picture. That was something that she could understand.

'And I wanted it so! Oh, I did want it so!' she said at last, under her breath.

'Me,—all me!' said Dick placidly. 'Look at their faces. It hits 'em. They don't know what makes their eyes and mouths open; but I know. And I know my work's right.'

'Yes. I see. Oh, what a thing to have come to one!'

'Come to one, indeed! I had to go out and look for it. What do you think?'

'I call it success. Tell me how you got it.'

They returned to the Park, and Dick delivered himself of the saga of his own doings, with all the arrogance of a young man speaking to a woman. From the beginning he told the tale, the I—I—I's flashing through the records as telegraph-poles fly past the traveller. Maisie listened and nodded her head. The histories of strife and privation did not move her a hair's-breadth. At the end of each canto he would conclude, 'And that gave me some notion of handling colour,' or light, or whatever it might be that he had set out to pursue and understand. He led her breathless across half the world, speaking as he had never spoken in his life before. And in the flood-tide of his exaltation there came upon him a great desire to pick up this maiden who nodded her head and said, 'I understand. Go on,'—to pick her up and to carry her away with him, because she was Maisie, and because she understood, and because she was his right, and a woman to be desired above all women.

Then he checked himself abruptly. 'And so I took

all I wanted,' he said, 'and I had to fight for it. Now you tell.'

Maisie's tale was almost as gray as her dress. It covered years of patient toil backed by savage pride that would not be broken though dealers laughed, and fogs delayed work, and Kami was unkind and even sarcastic, and girls in other studios were painfully polite. It had a few bright spots, in pictures accepted at provincial exhibitions, but it wound up with the oft-repeated wail, 'And so you see, Dick, I had no success, though I worked so hard.'

Then pity filled Dick. Even thus had Maisie spoken when she could not hit the breakwater, half an hour before she had kissed him. And that had happened yesterday.

'Never mind,' he said. 'I'll tell you something, if you'll believe it.' The words were shaping themselves of their own accord. 'The whole thing, lock, stock, and barrel, isn't worth one big yellow sea-poppy below Fort Keeling.'

Maisie flushed a little. 'It's all very well for you to talk, but you've had the success and I haven't.'

'Let me talk, then. I know you'll understand. Maisie, dear, it sounds a bit absurd, but those ten years never existed, and I've come back again. It really is just the same. Can't you see? You're alone now and I'm alone. What's the use of worrying? Come to me instead, darling.'

Maisie poked the gravel with her parasol. They were sitting on a bench. 'I understand,' she said slowly. 'But I've got my work to do, and I must do it.'

'Do it with me, then, dear. I won't interrupt.'

'No, I couldn't. It's my work,—mine,—mine,—

mine! I've been alone all my life in myself, and I'm not going to belong to anybody except myself. I remember things as well as you do, but that doesn't count. We were babies then, and we didn't know what was before us. Dick, don't be selfish. I think I see my way to a little success next year. Don't take it away from me.'

'I beg your pardon, darling. It's my fault for speaking stupidly. I can't expect you to throw up all your life just because I'm back. I'll go to my own place and wait a little.'

'But, Dick, I don't want you to—go—out of—my life, now you've just come back.'

'I'm at your orders; forgive me.' Dick devoured the troubled little face with his eyes. There was triumph in them, because he could not conceive that Maisie should refuse sooner or later to love him, since he loved her.

'It's wrong of me,' said Maisie, more slowly than before; 'it's wrong and selfish; but, oh, I've been so lonely! No, you misunderstand. Now I've seen you again,—it's absurd, but I want to keep you in my life.'

'Naturally. We belong.'

'We don't; but you always understood me, and there is so much in my work that you could help me in. You know things and the ways of doing things. You must.'

'I do, I fancy, or else I don't know myself. Then I suppose you won't care to lose sight of me altogether, and you want me to help you in your work?'

'Yes; but remember, Dick, nothing will ever come of it. That's why I feel so selfish. Let things stay as they are. I do want your help.'

'You shall have it. But let's consider. I must see your pics first, and overhaul your sketches, and find out

about your tendencies. You should see what the papers say about my tendencies! Then I'll give you good advice, and you shall paint according. Isn't that it, Maisie?'

Again there was unholy triumph in Dick's eye.

'It's too good of you,—much too good. Because you are consoling yourself with what will never happen, and I know that, and yet I wish to keep you. Don't blame me later, please.'

'I'm going into the matter with my eyes open. Moreover, the queen can do no wrong. It isn't your selfishness that impresses me. It's your audacity in proposing to make use of me.'

'Pooh! You're only Dick,—and a print-shop.'

'Very good: that's all I am. But, Maisie, you believe, don't you, that I love you? I don't want you to have any false notions about brothers and sisters.'

Maisie looked up for a moment and dropped her eyes.

'It's absurd, but—I believe. I wish I could send you away before you get angry with me. But—but the girl that lives with me is red-haired, and an impressionist, and all our notions clash.'

'So do ours, I think. Never mind. Three months from to-day we shall be laughing at this together.'

Maisie shook her head mournfully. 'I knew you wouldn't understand, and it will only hurt you more when you find out. Look at my face, Dick, and tell me what you see.'

They stood up and faced each other for a moment. The fog was gathering, and it stifled the roar of the traffic of London beyond the railings. Dick brought all his painfully-acquired knowledge of faces to bear on the eyes, mouth, and chin underneath the black velvet toque.

'It's the same Maisie, and it's the same me,' he said. 'We've both nice little wills of our own, and one or other of us has to be broken. Now about the future. I must come and see your pictures some day,—I suppose when the red-haired girl is on the premises.'

'Sundays are my best times. You must come on Sundays. There are such heaps of things I want to talk about and ask your advice about. Now I must get back to work.'

'Try to find out before next Sunday what I am,' said Dick. 'Don't take my word for anything I've told you. Good-bye, darling, and bless you.'

Maisie stole away like a little gray mouse. Dick watched her till she was out of sight, but he did not hear her say to herself, very soberly, 'I'm a wretch,—a horrid, selfish wretch. But it's Dick, and Dick will understand.'

No one has yet explained what actually happens when an irresistible force meets the immovable post, though many have thought deeply, even as Dick thought. He tried to assure himself that Maisie would be led in a few weeks by his mere presence and discourse to a better way of thinking. Then he remembered much too distinctly her face and all that was written on it.

'If I know anything of heads,' he said, 'there's everything in that face but love. I shall have to put that in myself; and that chin and mouth won't be won for nothing. But she's right. She knows what she wants, and she's going to get it. What insolence! Me! Of all the people in the wide world, to use me! But then she's Maisie. There's no getting over that fact; and it's good to see her again. This business must have been simmering at the back of my head for years. . . . She'll use me as I used Binat at Port Said. She's quite

right. It will hurt a little. I shall have to see her every Sunday,—like a young man courting a housemaid. She's sure to come round; and yet—that mouth isn't a yielding mouth. I shall be wanting to kiss her all the time, and I shall have to look at her pictures,—I don't even know what sort of work she does yet,—and I shall have to talk about Art,—Woman's Art! Therefore, particularly and perpetually, damn all varieties of Art! It did me a good turn once, and now it's in my way. I'll go home and do some Art.'

Half-way to the studio Dick was smitten with a terrible thought. The figure of a solitary woman in the fog suggested it.

'She's all alone in London, with a red-haired impressionist girl, who probably has the digestion of an ostrich. Most red-haired people have. Maisie's a bilious little body. They'll eat like lone women,—meals at all hours and tea with all meals. I remember how the students in Paris used to pig along. She may fall ill at any minute, and I shan't be able to help. Whew! This is ten times worse than owning a wife.'

Torpenhow came into the studio at dusk, and looked at Dick with his eyes full of the austere love that springs up between men who have tugged at the same oar together and are yoked by custom and use and the intimacies of toil. This is a good love, and, since it allows, and even encourages, strife, recrimination, and the most brutal sincerity, does not die, but increases, and is proof against any absence and evil conduct.

Dick was silent after he handed Torpenhow the filled pipe of council. He thought of Maisie and her possible needs. It was a new thing to think of anybody but Torpenhow, who could think for himself. Here at last

was an outlet for that cash balance. He could adorn Maisie barbarically with jewelry,—a thick gold necklace round that little neck, bracelets upon the rounded arms, and rings of price upon her hands,—the cool, temperate, ringless hands that he had taken between his own. It was an absurd thought, for Maisie would not even allow him to put one ring on one finger, and she would laugh at golden trappings. It would be better to sit with her quietly in the dusk, his arm round her neck and her face on his shoulder, as befitted husband and wife. Torpenhow's boots creaked that night, and his strong voice jarred. Dick's brows contracted and he murmured an evil word because he had taken all his success as a right and part payment for past discomfort, and now he was checked in his stride by a woman who admitted all the success and did not instantly care for him.

'I say, old man,' said Torpenhow, who had made one or two vain attempts at conversation, 'I haven't put your back up by anything I've said lately, have I?'

'You! No. How could you?'

''Liver out of order?'

'The truly healthy man doesn't know he has a liver. I'm only a bit worried about things in general. I suppose it's my soul.'

'The truly healthy man doesn't know he has a soul. What business have you with luxuries of that kind?'

'It came of itself. Who's the man that says that we're all islands shouting lies to each other across seas of misunderstanding?'

'He's right, whoever he is,—except about the misunderstanding. I don't think we could misunderstand each other.'

The blue smoke curled back from the ceiling in clouds. Then Torpenhow, insinuatingly—

'Dick, is it a woman?'

'Be hanged if it's anything remotely resembling a woman; and if you begin to talk like that, I'll hire a red-brick studio with white paint trimmings and begonias and petunias and blue Hungarias to play among three-and-sixpenny pot-palms, and I'll mount all my pics in aniline-dye plush plasters, and I'll invite every woman who yelps and maunders and moans over what her guide-books tell her is Art, and you shall receive 'em, Torp, —in a snuff-brown velvet coat with yellow trousers and an orange tie. You'll like that.'

'Too thin, Dick. A better man than you denied with cursing and swearing on a memorable occasion. You've overdone it, just as he did. It's no business of mine, of course, but it's comforting to think that somewhere under the stars there's saving up for you a tremendous thrashing. Whether it'll come from heaven or earth I don't know, but it's bound to come and break you up a little. You want hammering.'

Dick shivered. 'All right,' said he. 'When this island is disintegrated it will call for you.'

'I shall come round the corner and help to disintegrate it some more. We're talking nonsense. Come along to a theatre.'

CHAPTER VI

'And you may lead a thousand men,
Nor ever draw the rein,
But ere ye lead the Faery Queen
'Twill burst your heart in twain.'

He has slipped his foot from the stirrup-bar,
The bridle from his hand,
And he is bound by hand and foot
To the Queen o' Faery-land.
'Sir Hoggie and the Fairies.'

SOME weeks later, on a very foggy Sunday, Dick was returning across the Park to his studio. 'This,' he said, 'is evidently the thrashing that Torp meant. It hurts more than I expected; but the queen can do no wrong. And she certainly has some notion of drawing.'

He had just finished a Sunday visit to Maisie,—always under the green eyes of the red-haired impressionist girl, whom he learned to hate at sight,—and was tingling with a keen sense of shame. Sunday after Sunday, putting on his best clothes, he had walked over to the untidy house north of the Park, first to see Maisie's pictures, and then to criticise and advise upon them as he realised that they were productions on which advice would not be wasted. Sunday after Sunday, and his love grew with each visit, he had been compelled to cram his heart

back from between his lips when it prompted him to kiss Maisie several times and very much indeed. Sunday after Sunday, the head above the heart had warned him that Maisie was not yet attainable, and that it would be better to talk as connectedly as possible upon the mysteries of the craft that was all in all to her. Therefore it was his fate to endure weekly torture in the studio built out over the clammy back-garden of a frail stuffy little villa where nothing was ever in its right place and nobody ever called,—to endure and to watch Maisie moving to and fro with the teacups. He abhorred tea, but, since it gave him a little longer time in her presence, he drank it devoutly, and the red-haired girl sat in an untidy heap and eyed him without speaking. She was always watching him. Once, and only once, when she had left the studio Maisie showed him an album that held a few poor cuttings from provincial papers,—the briefest of hurried notes on some of her pictures sent to outlying exhibitions. Dick stooped and kissed the paint-smudged thumb on the open page. 'Oh, my love, my love,' he muttered, 'do you value these things? Chuck 'em into the waste-paper basket!'

'Not till I get something better,' said Maisie, shutting the book.

Then Dick, moved by no respect for his public and a very deep regard for the maiden, did deliberately propose, in order to secure more of these coveted cuttings, that he should paint a picture which Maisie should sign.

'That's childish,' said Maisie, 'and I didn't think it of you. It must be my work. Mine,—mine,—mine!'

'Go and design decorative medallions for rich brewers' houses. You are thoroughly good at that.' Dick was sick and savage.

'Better things than medallions, Dick,' was the answer in tones that recalled a gray-eyed atom's fearless speech to Mrs. Jennett. Dick would have abased himself utterly, but that the other girl trailed in.

Next Sunday he laid at Maisie's feet small gifts of pencils that could almost draw of themselves and colours in whose permanence he believed, and he was ostentatiously attentive to the work in hand. It demanded, among other things, an exposition of the faith that was in him. Torpenhow's hair would have stood on end had he heard the fluency with which Dick preached his own gospel of Art.

A month before, Dick would have been equally astonished; but it was Maisie's will and pleasure, and he dragged his words together to make plain to her comprehension all that had been hidden to himself of the whys and wherefores of work. There is not the least difficulty in doing a thing if you only know how to do it; the trouble is to explain your method.

'I could put this right if I had a brush in my hand,' said Dick despairingly, over the modelling of a chin that Maisie complained would not 'look flesh,'—it was the same chin that she had scraped out with the palette-knife,—'but I find it almost impossible to teach you. There's a queer grim Dutch touch about your painting that I like; but I've a notion that you're weak in drawing. You foreshorten as though you never used the model, and you've caught Kami's pasty way of dealing with flesh in shadow. Then, again, though you don't know it yourself, you shirk hard work. Suppose you spend some of your time on line alone. Line doesn't allow of shirking. Oils do, and three square inches of flashy, tricky stuff in the corner of a pic sometimes carry

a bad thing off,—as I know. That's immoral. Do line-work for a little while, and then I can tell more about your powers, as old Kami used to say.'

Maisie protested: she did not care for the pure line.

'I know,' said Dick. 'You want to do your fancy heads with a bunch of flowers at the base of the neck to hide bad modelling.' The red-haired girl laughed a little. 'You want to do landscapes with cattle knee-deep in grass to hide bad drawing. You want to do a great deal more than you can do. You have sense of colour, but you want form. Colour's a gift,—put it aside and think no more about it,—but form you can be drilled into. Now, all your fancy heads—and some of them are very good—will keep you exactly where you are. With line you must go forward or backward, and it will show up all your weaknesses.'

'But other people—' began Maisie.

'You mustn't mind what other people do. If their souls were your soul it would be different. You stand and fall by your own work, remember, and it is waste of time to think of any one else in this battle.'

Dick paused, and the longing that had been so resolutely put away came back into his eyes. He looked at Maisie, and the look asked as plainly as words, Was it not time to leave all this barren wilderness of canvas and counsel and join hands with Life and Love?

Maisie assented to the new programme of schooling so adorably that Dick could hardly restrain himself from picking her up then and there and carrying her off to the nearest registrar's office. It was the implicit obedience to the spoken word and the blank indifference to the unspoken desire that baffled and buffeted his soul. He held authority in that house,—authority limited, in-

deed, to one-half of one afternoon in seven, but very real while it lasted. Maisie had learned to appeal to him on many subjects, from the proper packing of pictures to the condition of a smoky chimney. The red-haired girl never consulted him about anything. On the other hand she accepted his appearances without protest, and watched him always. He discovered that the meals of the establishment were irregular and fragmentary. They depended chiefly on tea, pickles, and biscuit, as he had suspected from the beginning. The girls were supposed to market week and week about, but they lived, with the help of a charwoman, as casually as the young ravens. Maisie spent most of her income on models, and the other girl revelled in apparatus as refined as her work was rough. Armed with knowledge dear-bought from the Docks, Dick warned Maisie that the end of semi-starvation meant the crippling of power to work, which was considerably worse than death. Maisie took the warning, and gave more thought to what she ate and drank. When this trouble returned upon him, as it generally did in the long winter twilights, the remembrance of that little act of domestic authority and his coercion with a hearth-brush of the smoky drawing-room chimney stung Dick like a whip-lash.

He conceived that this memory would be the extreme of his sufferings, till, one Sunday, the red-haired girl announced that she would make a study of Dick's head, and that he would be good enough to sit still, and—quite as an afterthought—look at Maisie. He sat, because he could not well refuse, and for the space of half an hour he reflected on all the people in the past whom he had laid open for the purposes of his own craft. He remembered Binat most distinctly,—that Binat

who had once been an artist and talked about degradation.

It was the merest monochrome roughing-in of a head, but it presented the dumb waiting, the longing, and, above all, the hopeless enslavement of the man, in a spirit of bitter mockery.

'I'll buy it,' said Dick promptly, 'at your own price.'

'My price is too high, but I daresay you'll be as grateful if—' The wet sketch fluttered from the girl's hand and fell into the ashes of the studio stove. When she picked it up it was hopelessly smudged.

'Oh, it's all spoiled!' said Maisie. 'And I never saw it. Was it like?'

'Thank you,' said Dick under his breath to the red-haired girl, and he removed himself swiftly.

'How that man hates me!' said the girl. 'And how he loves you, Maisie!'

'What nonsense! I know Dick's very fond of me, but he has his work to do, and I have mine.'

'Yes, he is fond of you, and I think he knows there is something in impressionism, after all. Maisie, can't you see?'

'See? See what?'

'Nothing; only, I know that if I could get any man to look at me as that man looks at you, I'd—I don't know what I'd do! But he hates me. Oh, how he hates me!'

She was not altogether correct. Dick's hatred was tempered with gratitude for a few moments, and then he forgot the girl entirely. Only the sense of shame remained, and he was nursing it across the Park in the fog. 'There'll be an explosion one of these days,' he said wrathfully. 'But it isn't Maisie's fault; she's right, quite right, as far as she knows, and I can't blame her. This

business has been going on for three months nearly. Three months!—and it cost me ten years' knocking about to get at the notion, the merest raw notion, of my work. That's true; but then I didn't have pins, drawing-pins and palette-knives, stuck into me every Sunday. Oh, my little darling, if ever I break you, somebody will have a very bad time of it. No, she won't. I'd be as big a fool about her as I am now. I'll poison that red-haired girl on my wedding-day,—she's unwholesome,—and now I'll pass on these present bad times to Torp.'

Torpenhow had been moved to lecture Dick more than once lately on the sin of levity, and Dick had listened and replied not a word. In the weeks between the first few Sundays of his discipline he had flung himself savagely into his work, resolved that Maisie should at least know the full stretch of his powers. Then he had taught Maisie that she must not pay the least attention to any work outside her own, and Maisie had obeyed him all too well. She took his counsels, but was not interested in his pictures.

'Your things smell of tobacco and blood,' she said once. 'Can't you do anything except soldiers?'

'I could do a head of you that would startle you,' thought Dick,—this was before the red-haired girl had brought him under the guillotine,—but he only said, 'I am very sorry,' and harrowed Torpenhow's soul that evening with blasphemies against Art. Later, insensibly and to a large extent against his own will, he ceased to interest himself in his own work. For Maisie's sake, and to soothe the self-respect that it seemed to him he lost each Sunday, he would not consciously turn out bad stuff, but, since Maisie did not care even for his best, it were better not to do anything at all save wait and mark

time between Sunday and Sunday. Torpenhow was disgusted as the weeks went by fruitless, and then attacked him one Sunday evening when Dick felt utterly exhausted after three hours' biting self-restraint in Maisie's presence. There was Language, and Torpenhow withdrew to consult the Nilghai, who had come in to talk continental politics.

'Bone-idle, is he? Careless, and touched in the temper?' said the Nilghai. 'It isn't worth worrying over. Dick is probably playing the fool with a woman.'

'Isn't that bad enough?'

'No. She may throw him out of gear and knock his work to pieces for a while. She may even turn up here some day and make a scene on the staircase: one never knows. But until Dick speaks of his own accord you had better not touch him. He is no easy-tempered man to handle.'

'No; I wish he were. He is such an aggressive, cocksure, you-be-damned fellow.'

'He'll get that knocked out of him in time. He must learn that he can't storm up and down the world with a box of moist tubes and a slick brush. You're fond of him?'

'I'd take any punishment that's in store for him if I could; but the worst of it is, no man can save his brother.'

'No, and the worser of it is, there is no discharge in this war. Dick must learn his lesson like the rest of us. Talking of war, there'll be trouble in the Balkans in the spring.'

'That trouble is long coming. I wonder if we could drag Dick out there when it comes off?'

Dick entered the room soon afterwards, and the question was put to him. 'Not good enough,' he said shortly. 'I'm too comf'y where I am.'

'Surely you aren't taking all the stuff in the papers seriously?' said the Nilghai. 'Your vogue will be ended in less than six months,—the public will know your touch and go on to something new,—and where will you be then?'

'Here, in England.'

'When you might be doing decent work among us out there? Nonsense! I shall go, The Keneu will be there, Torp will be there, Cassavetti will be there, and the whole lot of us will be there, and we shall have as much as ever we can do, with unlimited fighting and the chance for you of seeing things that would make the reputation of three Verestchagins.'

'Um!' said Dick, pulling at his pipe.

'You prefer to stay here and imagine that all the world is gaping at your pictures? Just think how full an average man's life is of his own pursuits and pleasures. When twenty thousand of him find time to look up between mouthfuls and grunt something about something they aren't the least interested in, the net result is called fame, reputation, or notoriety, according to the taste and fancy of the speller my lord.'

'I know that as well as you do. Give me credit for a little gumption.'

'Be hanged if I do!'

'Be hanged, then; you probably will be,—for a spy, by excited Turks. Heigh-ho! I'm weary, dead weary, and virtue has gone out of me.' Dick dropped into a chair, and was fast asleep in a minute.

'That's a bad sign,' said the Nilghai, in an undertone.

Torpenhow picked the pipe from the waistcoat where it was beginning to burn, and put a pillow behind the head. 'We can't help; we can't help,' he said. 'It's a

good ugly sort of old cocoa-nut, and I'm fond of it. There's the scar of the wipe he got when he was cut over in the square.'

'Shouldn't wonder if that has made him a trifle mad.'

'I should. He's a most businesslike madman.'

Then Dick began to snore furiously.

'Oh, here, no affection can stand this sort of thing. Wake up, Dick, and go and sleep somewhere else, if you intend to make a noise about it.'

'When a cat has been out on the tiles all night,' said the Nilghai in his beard, 'I notice that she usually sleeps all day. This is natural history.'

Dick staggered away rubbing his eyes and yawning. In the night-watches he was overtaken with an idea, so simple and so luminous that he wondered he had never conceived it before. It was full of craft. He would seek Maisie on a week-day,—would suggest an excursion, and would take her by train to Fort Keeling, over the very ground that they two had trodden together ten years ago.

'As a general rule,' he explained to his chin-lathered reflection in the morning, 'it isn't safe to cross an old trail twice. Things remind one of things, and a cold wind gets up, and you feel sad; but this is an exception to every rule that ever was. I'll go to Maisie at once.'

Fortunately, the red-haired girl was out shopping when he arrived, and Maisie in a paint-spattered blouse was warring with her canvas. She was not pleased to see him; for week-day visits were a stretch of the bond; and it needed all his courage to explain his errand.

'I know you've been working too hard,' he concluded, with an air of authority. 'If you do that you'll break down. You had much better come.'

'Where to?' said Maisie wearily. She had been standing before her easel too long, and was very tired.

'Anywhere you please. We'll take a train to-morrow and see where it stops. We'll have lunch somewhere, and I'll bring you back in the evening.'

'If there's a good working light to-morrow I lose a day.' Maisie balanced the heavy white chestnut palette irresolutely.

Dick bit back an oath that was hurrying to his lips. He had not yet learned patience with the maiden to whom her work was all in all.

'You'll lose ever so many more, dear, if you use every hour of working light. Overwork's only murderous idleness. Don't be unreasonable. I'll call for you to-morrow after breakfast early.'

'But surely you are going to ask—'

'No, I am not. I want you and nobody else. Besides, she hates me as much as I hate her. She won't care to come. To-morrow, then; and pray that we get sunshine.'

Dick went away delighted, and by consequence did no work whatever. He strangled a wild desire to order a special train, but bought a great gray kangaroo cloak lined with glossy black marten, and then retired into himself to consider things.

'I'm going out for the day to-morrow with Dick,' said Maisie to the red-haired girl when the latter returned, tired, from marketing in the Edgware Road.

'He deserves it. I shall have the studio floor thoroughly scrubbed while you're away. It's very dirty.'

Maisie had enjoyed no sort of holiday for months, and looked forward to the little excitement, but not without misgivings.

'There's nobody nicer than Dick when he talks sensibly,' she thought, 'but I'm sure he'll be silly and worry me, and I'm sure I can't tell him anything he'd like to hear. If he'd only be sensible I should like him so much better.'

Dick's eyes were full of joy when he made his appearance next morning and saw Maisie, gray-ulstered and black-velvet-hatted, standing in the hall-way. Palaces of marble, and not sordid imitations of grained wood, were surely the fittest background for such a divinity. The red-haired girl drew her into the studio for a moment and kissed her hurriedly. Maisie's eyebrows climbed to the top of her forehead; she was altogether unused to these demonstrations. 'Mind my hat,' she said, hurrying away, and ran down the steps to Dick waiting by the hansom.

'Are you quite warm enough? Are you sure you wouldn't like some more breakfast? Put this cloak over your knees.'

'I'm quite comf'y, thanks. Where are we going, Dick? Oh, do stop singing like that. People will think we're mad.'

'Let 'em think,—if the exertion doesn't kill them. They don't know who we are, and I'm sure I don't care who they are. My faith, Maisie, you're looking lovely!'

Maisie stared directly in front of her and did not reply. The wind of a keen, clear winter morning had put colour into her cheeks. Overhead, the creamy-yellow smoke-clouds were thinning away one by one against a pale-blue sky, and the improvident sparrows broke off from water-spout committees and cab-rank cabals to clamour of the coming of spring.

'It will be lovely weather in the country,' said Dick.

'But where are we going?'

'Wait and see.'

They stopped at Victoria, and Dick sought tickets. For less than half the fraction of an instant it occurred to Maisie, comfortably settled by the waiting-room fire, that it was much more pleasant to send a man to the booking-office than to elbow one's way through the crowd. Dick put her into a Pullman,—solely on account of the warmth there; and she regarded the extravagance with grave scandalised eyes as the train moved out into the country.

'I wish I knew where we are going,' she repeated for the twentieth time. The name of a well-remembered station flashed by, towards the end of the run, and Maisie was enlightened.

'Oh, Dick, you villain!'

'Well, I thought you might like to see the place again. You haven't been here since old times, have you?'

'No. I never cared to see Mrs. Jennett again; and she was all that was ever there.'

'Not quite. Look out a minute. There's the windmill above the potato-fields; they haven't built villas there yet; d'you remember when I shut you up in it?'

'Yes. How she beat you for it! I never told it was you.'

'She guessed. I jammed a stick under the door and told you that I was burying Amomma alive in the potatoes, and you believed me. You had a trusting nature in those days.'

They laughed and leaned to look out, identifying ancient landmarks with many reminiscences. Dick fixed his weather eye on the curve of Maisie's cheek, very near his own, and watched the blood rise under the clear skin.

He congratulated himself upon his cunning, and looked that the evening would bring him a great reward.

When the train stopped they went out to look at an old town with new eyes. First, but from a distance, they regarded the house of Mrs. Jennett.

'Suppose she should come out now, what would you do?' said Dick, with mock terror.

'I should make a face.'

'Show then,' said Dick, dropping into the speech of childhood.

Maisie made that face in the direction of the mean little villa, and Dick laughed aloud.

' "This is disgraceful," ' said Maisie, mimicking Mrs Jennett's tone. ' "Maisie, you run in at once, and learn the collect, gospel, and epistle for the next three Sundays. After all I've taught you, too, and three helps every Sunday at dinner! Dick's always leading you into mischief. If you aren't a gentleman, Dick, you might at least—" '

The sentence ended abruptly. Maisie remembered when it had last been used.

' "Try to behave like one," ' said Dick promptly. 'Quite right. Now we'll get some lunch and go on to Fort Keeling,—unless you'd rather drive there?'

'We must walk, out of respect to the place. How little changed it all is!'

They turned in the direction of the sea through unaltered streets, and the influence of old things lay upon them. Presently they passed a confectioner's shop much considered in the days when their joint pocket-money amounted to a shilling a week.

'Dick, have you any pennies?' said Maisie, half to herself.

'Only three; and if you think you're going to have two of 'em to buy peppermints with, you're wrong. She says peppermints aren't ladylike.'

Again they laughed, and again the colour came into Maisie's cheeks as the blood boiled through Dick's heart. After a large lunch they went down to the beach and to Fort Keeling across the waste, wind-bitten land that no builder had thought it worth his while to defile. The winter breeze came in from the sea and sang about their ears.

'Maisie,' said Dick, 'your nose is getting a crude Prussian blue at the tip. I'll race you as far as you please for as much as you please.'

She looked round cautiously, and with a laugh set off, swiftly as the ulster allowed, till she was out of breath.

'We used to run miles,' she panted. 'It's absurd that we can't run now.'

'Old age, dear. This it is to get fat and sleek in town. When I wished to pull your hair you generally ran for three miles, shrieking at the top of your voice. I ought to know, because those shrieks were meant to call up Mrs. Jennett with a cane and—'

'Dick, I never got you a beating on purpose in my life.'

'No, of course you never did. Good Heavens! look at the sea.'

'Why, it's the same as ever!' said Maisie.

Torpenhow had gathered from Mr. Beeton that Dick, properly dressed and shaved, had left the house at half-past eight in the morning with a travelling-rug over his arm. The Nilghai rolled in at mid-day for chess and polite conversation.

'It's worse than anything I imagined,' said Torpenhow.

'Oh, the everlasting Dick, I suppose! You fuss over him like a hen with one chick. Let him run riot if he thinks it'll amuse him. You can whip a young pup off feather, but you can't whip a young man.'

'It isn't a woman. It's one woman; and it's a girl.'

'Where's your proof?'

'He got up and went out at eight this morning,—got up in the middle of the night, by Jove! a thing he never does except when he's on service. Even then, remember, we had to kick him out of his blankets before the fight began at El-Maghrib. It's disgusting.'

'It looks odd; but maybe he's decided to buy a horse at last. He might get up for that, mightn't he?'

'Buy a blazing wheelbarrow! He'd have told us if there was a horse in the wind. It's a girl.'

'Don't be certain. Perhaps it's only a married woman."

'Dick has some sense of humour, if you haven't. Who gets up in the gray dawn to call on another man's wife? It's a girl.'

'Let it be a girl, then. She may teach him that there's somebody else in the world besides himself.'

'She'll spoil his hand. She'll waste his time, and she'll marry him, and ruin his work for ever. He'll be a respectable married man before we can stop him, and—he'll never go on the long trail again.'

'All quite possible, but the earth won't spin the other way when it happens. . . . Ho! ho! I'd give something to see Dick "go wooing with the boys." Don't worry about it. These things be with Allah, and we can only look on. Get the chessmen.'

The red-haired girl was lying down in her own room, staring at the ceiling. The footsteps of people on the pavement sounded, as they grew indistinct in the distance, like a many-times-repeated kiss that was all one long kiss. Her hands were by her side, and they opened and shut savagely from time to time.

The charwoman in charge of the scrubbing of the studio knocked at her door: 'Beg y' pardon, miss, but in cleanin' of a floor there's two, not to say three, kind of soap, which is yaller, an' mottled, an' disinfectink. Now, jist before I took my pail into the passage I thought it would be pre'aps jest as well if I was to come up 'ere an ask you what sort of soap you was wishful that I should use on them boards. The yaller soap, miss—'

There was nothing in the speech to have caused the paroxysm of fury that drove the red-haired girl into the middle of the room, almost shouting—

'Do you suppose I care what you use? Any kind will do!—any kind!'

The woman fled, and the red-haired girl looked at her own reflection in the glass for an instant and covered her face with her hands. It was as though she had shouted some shameless secret aloud.

CHAPTER VII

Roses red and roses white
Plucked I for my love's delight.
She would none of all my posies,—
Bade me gather her blue roses.

Half the world I wandered through,
Seeking where such flowers grew;
Half the world unto my quest
Answered but with laugh and jest.

It may be beyond the grave
She shall find what she would have.
Mine was but an idle quest,—
Roses white and red are best!

'Blue Roses.'

INDEED the sea had not changed. Its waters were low on the mud-banks, and the Marazion bell-buoy clanked and swung in the tide-way. On the white beach-sand dried stumps of sea-poppy shivered and chattered together.

'I don't see the old breakwater,' said Maisie under her breath.

'Let's be thankful that we have as much as we have. I don't believe they've mounted a single new gun on the fort since we were here. Come and look.'

They came to the glacis of Fort Keeling, and sat down

in a nook sheltered from the wind under the tarred throat of a forty-pounder cannon.

'Now, if Amomma were only here!' said Maisie.

For a long time both were silent. Then Dick took Maisie's hand and called her by her name.

She shook her head and looked out to sea.

'Maisie, darling, doesn't it make any difference?'

'No!' between clenched teeth. 'I'd—I'd tell you if it did; but it doesn't. Oh, Dick, please be sensible.'

'Don't you think that it ever will?'

'No, I'm sure it won't.'

'Why?'

Maisie rested her chin on her hand, and, still regarding the sea, spoke hurriedly—

'I know what you want perfectly well, but I can't give it you, Dick. It isn't my fault; indeed it isn't. If I felt that I could care for any one—But I don't feel that I care. I simply don't understand what the feeling means.'

'Is that true, dear?'

'You've been very good to me, Dickie; and the only way I can pay you back is by speaking the truth. I daren't tell a fib. I despise myself quite enough as it is.'

'What in the world for?'

'Because—because I take everything that you give me and I give you nothing in return. It's mean and selfish of me, and whenever I think of it it worries me.'

'Understand once for all, then, that I can manage my own affairs, and if I choose to do anything you aren't to blame. You haven't a single thing to reproach yourself with, darling.'

'Yes, I have, and talking only makes it worse.'

'Then don't talk about it.'

'How can I help myself? If you find me alone for a

minute you are always talking about it; and when you aren't you look it. You don't know how I despise myself sometimes.'

'Great goodness!' said Dick, nearly jumping to his feet. 'Speak the truth now, Maisie, if you never speak it again! Do I—does this worrying bore you?'

'No. It does not.'

'You'd tell me if it did?'

'I should let you know, I think.'

'Thank you. The other thing is fatal. But you must learn to forgive a man when he's in love. He's always a nuisance. You must have known that?'

Maisie did not consider the last question worth answering, and Dick was forced to repeat it.

'There were other men, of course. They always worried just when I was in the middle of my work, and wanted me to listen to them.'

'Did you listen?'

'At first; and they couldn't understand why I didn't care. And they used to praise my pictures; and I thought they meant it. I used to be proud of the praise, and tell Kami, and—I shall never forget—once Kami laughed at me.'

'You don't like being laughed at, Maisie, do you?'

'I hate it. I never laugh at other people unless—unless they do bad work. Dick, tell me honestly what you think of my pictures generally—of everything of mine that you've seen.'

' "Honest, honest, and honest over!" ' quoted Dick from a catchword of long ago. 'Tell me what Kami always says.'

Maisie hesitated. 'He—he says that there is feeling in them.'

'How dare you tell me a fib like that? Remember, I was under Kami for two years. I know exactly what he says.'

'It isn't a fib.'

'It's worse; it's a half-truth. Kami says, when he puts his head on one side,—so,—"Il y a du sentiment, mais il n'y a pas de parti pris." ' He rolled the 'r' threateningly, as Kami used to do.

'Yes, that is what he says; and I'm beginning to think that he is right.'

'Certainly he is.' Dick admitted that two people in the world could do and say no wrong. Kami was the man.

'And now you say the same thing. It's so disheartening.'

'I'm sorry, but you asked me to speak the truth. Besides, I love you too much to pretend about your work. It's strong, it's patient sometimes,—not always,—and sometimes there's power in it, but there's no special reason why it should be done at all. At least, that's how it strikes me.'

'There's no special reason why anything in the world should ever be done. You know that as well as I do. I only want success.'

'You're going the wrong way to get it, then. Hasn't Kami ever told you so?'

'Don't quote Kami to me. I want to know what you think. My work's bad, to begin with.'

'I didn't say that, and I don't think it.'

'It's amateurish, then.'

'That it most certainly is not. You're a workwoman, darling, to your boot-heels, and I respect you for that.'

'You don't laugh at me behind my back?'

'No, dear. You see, you are more to me than any one else. Put this cloak thing round you, or you'll get chilled.'

Maisie wrapped herself in the soft marten skins, turning the gray kangaroo fur to the outside.

'This is delicious,' she said, rubbing her chin thoughtfully along the fur. 'Well? Why am I wrong in trying to get a little success?'

'Just because you try. Don't you understand, darling? Good work has nothing to do with—doesn't belong to—the person who does it. It's put into him or her from outside.'

'But how does that affect—'

'Wait a minute. All we can do is to learn how to do our work, to be masters of our materials instead of servants, and never to be afraid of anything.'

'I understand that.'

'Everything else comes from outside ourselves. Very good. If we sit down quietly to work out notions that are sent to us, we may or we may not do something that isn't bad. A great deal depends on being master of the bricks and mortar of the trade. But the instant we begin to think about success and the effect of our work—to play with one eye on the gallery—we lose power and touch and everything else. At least that's how I have found it. Instead of being quiet and giving every power you possess to your work, you're fretting over something which you can neither help nor hinder by a minute. See?'

'It's so easy for you to talk in that way. People like what you do. Don't you ever think about the gallery?'

'Much too often; but I'm always punished for it by loss of power. It's as simple as the Rule of Three. If

we make light of our work by using it for our own ends, our work will make light of us, and, as we're the weaker, we shall suffer.'

'I don't treat my work lightly. You know that it's everything to me.'

'Of course; but, whether you realise it or not, you give two strokes for yourself to one for your work. It isn't your fault, darling. I do exactly the same thing, and know that I'm doing it. Most of the French schools, and all the schools here, drive the students to work for their own credit, and for the sake of their pride. I was told that all the world was interested in my work, and everybody at Kami's talked turpentine, and I honestly believed that the world needed elevating and influencing and all manner of impertinences, by my brushes. By Jove, I actually believed that! When my little head was bursting with a notion that I couldn't handle because I hadn't sufficient knowledge of my craft, I used to run about wondering at my own magnificence and getting ready to astonish the world.'

'But surely one can do that sometimes?'

'Very seldom with malice aforethought, darling. And when it's done it's such a tiny thing, and the world's so big, and all but a millionth part of it doesn't care. Maisie, come with me and I'll show you something of the size of the world. One can no more avoid working than eating,—that goes on by itself,—but try to see what you are working for. I know such little heavens that I could take you to,—islands tucked away under the Line. You sight them after weeks of crashing through water as black as black marble because it's so deep, and you sit in the fore-chains day after day and see the sun rise almost afraid because the sea's so lonely.'

'Who is afraid?—you, or the sun?'

'The sun, of course. And there are noises under the sea, and sounds overhead in a clear sky. Then you find your island alive with hot moist orchids that make mouths at you, and can do everything except talk. There's a waterfall in it three hundred feet high, just like a sliver of green jade laced with silver; and millions of wild bees live up in the rocks; and you can hear the fat cocoa-nuts falling from the palms; and you order an ivory-white servant to sling you a long yellow hammock with tassels on it like ripe maize, and you put up your feet and hear the bees hum and the water fall till you go to sleep.'

'Can one work there?'

'Certainly. One must do something always. You hang your canvas up in a palm-tree and let the parrots criticise. When they scuffle you heave a ripe custard-apple at them, and it bursts in a lather of cream. There are hundreds of places. Come and see them.'

'I don't quite like that place. It sounds lazy. Tell me another.'

'What do you think of a big, red, dead city built of red sandstone, with raw green aloes growing between the stones, lying out neglected on honey-coloured sands? There are forty dead kings there, Maisie, each in a gorgeous tomb finer than all the others. You look at the palaces and streets and shops and tanks, and think that men must live there, till you find a wee gray squirrel rubbing its nose all alone in the market-place, and a jewelled peacock struts out of a carved doorway and spreads its tail against a marble screen as fine pierced as point-lace. Then a monkey — a little black monkey— walks through the main square to get a drink from a

tank forty feet deep. He slides down the creepers to the water's edge, and a friend holds him by the tail in case he should fall in.'

'Is all that true?'

'I've been there and seen. Then evening comes, and the lights change till it's just as though you stood in the heart of a king-opal. A little before sundown, as punctually as clockwork, a big bristly wild boar, with all his family following, trots through the city gate, churning the foam on his tusks. You climb on the shoulder of a blind black stone god and watch that pig choose himself a palace for the night and stump in wagging his tail. Then the night-wind gets up, and the sands move, and you hear the desert outside the city singing, "Now I lay me down to sleep," and everything is dark till the moon rises. Maisie, darling, come with me and see what the world is really like. It's very lovely, and it's very horrible,—but I won't let you see anything horrid,—and it doesn't care your life or mine for pictures or anything else except doing its own work and making love. Come and I'll show you how to brew sangaree, and sling a hammock, and—oh, thousands of things, and you'll see for yourself what colour means, and we'll find out together what love means, and then, maybe, we shall be allowed to do some good work. Come away!'

'Why?' said Maisie.

'How can you do anything until you have seen everything, or as much as you can? And besides, darling, I love you. Come along with me. You have no business here; you don't belong to this place; you're half a gipsy,—your face tells that; and I—even the smell of open water makes me restless. Come across the sea and be happy!'

He had risen to his feet, and stood in the shadow of the gun, looking down at the girl. The very short winter afternoon had worn away, and, before they knew, the winter moon was walking the untroubled sea. Long ruled lines of silver showed where a ripple of the rising tide was turning over the mud-banks. The wind had dropped, and in the intense stillness they could hear a donkey cropping the frosty grass many yards away. A faint beating like that of a muffled drum came out of the moon-haze.

'What's that?' said Maisie quickly. 'It sounds like a heart beating. Where is it?'

Dick was so angry at this sudden wrench to his pleadings that he could not trust himself to speak, and in this silence caught the sound. Maisie from her seat under the gun watched him with a certain amount of fear. She wished so much that he would be sensible and cease to worry her with over-sea emotion that she both could and could not understand. She was not prepared, however, for the change in his face as he listened.

'It's a steamer,' he said,—'a twin-screw steamer, by the beat. I can't make her out, but she must be standing very close in-shore. Ah!' as the red of a rocket streaked the haze, 'she's standing in to signal before she clears the Channel.'

'Is it a wreck?' said Maisie, to whom these words were as Greek.

Dick's eyes were turned to the sea. 'Wreck! What nonsense! She's only reporting herself. Red rocket forward—there's a green light aft now, and two red rockets from the bridge.'

'What does that mean?'

'It's the signal of the Cross Keys Line running to Aus-

tralia. I wonder which steamer it is.' The note of his voice had changed; he seemed to be talking to himself, and Maisie did not approve of it. The moonlight broke the haze for a moment, touching the black sides of a long steamer working down Channel. 'Four masts and three funnels—she's in deep draught, too. That must be the "Barralong," or the "Bhutia." No, the "Bhutia" has a clipper bow. It's the "Barralong," to Australia. She'll lift the Southern Cross in a week,—lucky old tub!—oh, lucky old tub!'

He stared intently, and moved up the slope of the fort to get a better view, but the mist on the sea thickened again, and the beating of the screws grew fainter. Maisie called to him a little angrily, and he returned, still keeping his eyes to seaward. 'Have you ever seen the Southern Cross blazing right over your head?' he asked. 'It's superb!'

'No,' she said shortly, 'and I don't want to. If you think it's so lovely why don't you go and see it yourself?'

She raised her face from the soft blackness of the marten skins about her throat, and her eyes shone like diamonds. The moonlight on the gray kangaroo fur turned it to frosted silver of the coldest.

'By Jove, Maisie, you look like a little heathen idol tucked up there.' The eyes showed that they did not appreciate the compliment. 'I'm sorry,' he continued. 'The Southern Cross isn't worth looking at unless some one helps you to see. That steamer's out of hearing.'

'Dick,' she said quietly, 'suppose I were to come to you now,—be quiet a minute,—just as I am, and caring for you just as much as I do.'

'Not as a brother, though? You said you didn't—in the Park.'

'I never had a brother. Suppose I said, "Take me to those places, and in time, perhaps, I might really care for you," what would you do?'

'Send you straight back to where you came from, in a cab. No, I wouldn't; I'd let you walk. But you couldn't do it, dear. And I wouldn't run the risk. You're worth waiting for till you can come without reservation.'

'Do you honestly believe that?'

'I have a hazy sort of idea that I do. Has it never struck you in that light?'

'Ye—es. I feel so wicked about it.'

'Wickeder than usual?'

'You don't know all I think. It's almost too awful to tell.'

'Never mind. You promised to tell me the truth—at least.'

'It's so ungrateful of me, but—but, though I know you care for me, and I like to have you with me, I'd—I'd even sacrifice you, if that would bring me what I want.'

'My poor little darling! I know that state of mind. It doesn't lead to good work.'

'You aren't angry? Remember, I do despise myself.'

'I'm not exactly flattered,—I had guessed as much before,—but I'm not angry. I'm sorry for you. Surely you ought to have left a littleness like that behind you years ago.'

'You've no right to patronise me! I only want what I have worked for so long. It came to you without any trouble, and—and I don't think it's fair.'

'What can I do? I'd give ten years of my life to get you what you want. But I can't help you; even I can't help.'

A murmur of dissent from Maisie. He went on—

'And I know by what you have just said that you're on the wrong road to success. It isn't got at by sacrificing other people,—I've had that much knocked into me; you must sacrifice yourself, and live under orders, and never think for yourself, and never have real satisfaction in your work except just at the beginning, when you're reaching out after a notion.'

'How can you believe all that?'

'There's no question of belief or disbelief. That's the law, and you take it or refuse it as you please. I try to obey, but I can't, and then my work turns bad on my hands. Under any circumstances, remember, four-fifths of everybody's work must be bad. But the remnant is worth the trouble for its own sake.'

'Isn't it nice to get credit even for bad work?'

'It's much too nice. But—May I tell you something? It isn't a pretty tale, but you're so like a man that I forget when I'm talking to you.'

'Tell me.'

'Once when I was out in the Soudan I went over some ground that we had been fighting on for three days. There were twelve hundred dead; and we hadn't time to bury them.'

'How ghastly!'

'I had been at work on a big double-sheet sketch, and I was wondering what people would think of it at home. The sight of that field taught me a good deal. It looked just like a bed of horrible toadstools in all colours, and—I'd never seen men in bulk go back to their beginnings before. So I began to understand that men and women were only material to work with, and that what they said or did was of no consequence. See? Strictly speak-

ing, you might just as well put your ear down to the palette to catch what your colours are saying.'

'Dick, that's disgraceful!'

'Wait a minute. I said strictly speaking. Unfortunately, everybody must be either a man or a woman.'

'I'm glad you allow that much.'

'In your case I don't. You aren't a woman. But ordinary people, Maisie, must behave and work as such. That's what makes me so savage.' He hurled a pebble towards the sea as he spoke. 'I know that it is outside my business to care what people say; I can see that it spoils my output if I listen to 'em; and yet, confound it all,'—another pebble flew seaward,—'I can't help purring when I'm rubbed the right way. Even when I can see on a man's forehead that he is lying his way through a clump of pretty speeches, those lies make me happy and play the mischief with my hand.'

'And when he doesn't say pretty things?'

'Then, belovedest,'—Dick grinned,—'I forget that I am the steward of these gifts, and I want to make that man love and appreciate my work with a thick stick. It's too humiliating altogether; but I suppose even if one were an angel and painted humans altogether from outside, one would lose in touch what one gained in grip.'

Maisie laughed at the idea of Dick as an angel.

'But you seem to think,' she said, 'that everything nice spoils your hand.'

'I don't think. It's the law,—just the same as it was at Mrs. Jennett's. Everything that is nice does spoil your hand. I'm glad you see so clearly.'

'I don't like the view.'

'Nor I. But—have got orders: what can do? Are you strong enough to face it alone?'

'I suppose I must.'

'Let me help, darling. We can hold each other very tight and try to walk straight. We shall blunder horribly, but it will be better than stumbling apart. Maisie, can't you see reason?'

'I don't think we should get on together. We should be two of a trade, so we should never agree.'

'How I should like to meet the man who made that proverb! He lived in a cave and ate raw bear, I fancy. I'd make him chew his own arrow-heads. Well?'

'I should be only half married to you. I should worry and fuss about my work as I do now. Four days out of the seven I'm not fit to speak to.'

'You talk as if no one else in the world had ever used a brush. D'you suppose that I don't know the feeling of worry and bother and can't-get-at-ness? You're lucky if you only have it four days out of the seven. What difference would that make?'

'A great deal—if you had it too.'

'Yes, but I could respect it. Another man might not. He might laugh at you. But there's no use talking about it. If you can think in that way you can't care for me—yet.'

The tide had nearly covered the mud-banks, and twenty little ripples broke on the beach before Maisie chose to speak.

'Dick,' she said slowly, 'I believe very much that you are better than I am.'

'This doesn't seem to bear on the argument—but in what way?'

'I don't quite know, but in what you said about work and things; and then you're so patient. Yes, you're better than I am.'

Dick considered rapidly the murkiness of an average man's life. There was nothing in the review to fill him with a sense of virtue. He lifted the hem of the cloak to his lips.

'Why,' said Maisie, making as though she had not noticed, 'can you see things that I can't? I don't believe what you believe; but you're right, I believe.'

'If I've seen anything, God knows I couldn't have seen it but for you, and I know that I couldn't have said it except to you. You seemed to make everything clear for a minute; but I don't practise what I preach. You would help me. . . . There are only us two in the world for all purposes, and—and you like to have me with you?'

'Of course I do. I wonder if you can realise how utterly lonely I am!'

'Darling, I think I can.'

'Two years ago, when I first took the little house, I used to walk up and down the back-garden trying to cry. I never can cry. Can you?'

'It's some time since I tried. What was the trouble? Overwork?'

'I don't know; but I used to dream that I had broken down, and had no money, and was starving in London. I thought about it all day, and it frightened me—oh, how it frightened me!'

'I know that fear. It's the most terrible of all. It wakes me up in the night sometimes. You oughtn't to know anything about it.'

'How do you know?'

'Never mind. Is your three hundred a year safe?'

'It's in Consols.'

'Very well. If any one comes to you and recommends

a better investment,—even if I should come to you,—don't you listen. Never shift the money for a minute, and never lend a penny of it,—even to the red-haired girl.'

'Don't scold me so! I'm not likely to be foolish.'

'The earth is full of men who'd sell their souls for three hundred a year; and women come and talk, and borrow a five-pound note here and a ten-pound note there; and a woman has no conscience in a money debt. Stick to your money, Maisie; for there's nothing more ghastly in the world than poverty in London. It's scared me. By Jove, it put the fear into me! And one oughtn't to be afraid of anything.'

To each man is appointed his particular dread,—the terror that, if he does not fight against it, must cow him even to the loss of his manhood. Dick's experience of the sordid misery of want had entered into the deeps of him, and, lest he might find virtue too easy, that memory stood behind him, tempting to shame, when dealers came to buy his wares. As the Nilghai quaked against his will at the still green water of a lake or a mill-dam, as Torpenhow flinched before any white arm that could cut or stab and loathed himself for flinching, Dick feared the poverty he had once tasted half in jest. His burden was heavier than the burdens of his companions.

Maisie watched the face working in the moonlight.

'You've plenty of pennies now,' she said soothingly.

'I shall never get enough,' he began, with vicious emphasis. Then laughing, 'I shall always be threepence short in my accounts.'

'Why threepence?'

'I carried a man's bag once from Liverpool Street Station to Blackfriars Bridge. It was a sixpenny job,—

you needn't laugh; indeed it was,—and I wanted the money desperately. He only gave me threepence; and he hadn't even the decency to pay in silver. Whatever money I make I shall never get that odd threepence out of the world.'

This was not language befitting the man who had preached of the sanctity of work. It jarred on Maisie, who preferred her payment in applause, which, since all men desire it, must be of the right. She hunted for her little purse and gravely took out a threepenny bit.

'There it is,' she said. 'I'll pay you, Dickie; and don't worry any more; it isn't worth while. Are you paid?'

'I am,' said the very human apostle of fair craft, taking the coin. 'I'm paid a thousand times, and we'll close that account. It shall live on my watch-chain; and you're an angel, Maisie.'

'I'm very cramped, and I'm feeling a little cold. Good gracious! the cloak is all white, and so is your moustache! I never knew it was so chilly.'

A light frost lay white on the shoulder of Dick's ulster. He, too, had forgotten the state of the weather. They laughed together, and with that laugh ended all serious discourse.

They ran inland across the waste to warm themselves, then turned to look at the glory of the full tide under the moonlight and the intense black shadows of the furze-bushes. It was an additional joy to Dick that Maisie could see colour even as he saw it,—could see the blue in the white of the mist, the violet that is in gray palings, and all things else as they are,—not of one hue, but a thousand. And the moonlight came into Maisie's soul, so that she, usually reserved, chattered of herself and of the

things she took interest in,—of Kami, wisest of teachers, and of the girls in the studio,—of the Poles, who will kill themselves with overwork if they are not checked; of the French, who talk at great length of much more than they will ever accomplish; of the slovenly English, who toil hopelessly and cannot understand that inclination does not imply power; of the Americans, whose rasping voices in the hush of a hot afternoon strain tense-drawn nerves to breaking-point, and whose suppers lead to indigestion; of tempestuous Russians, neither to hold nor to bind, who tell the girls ghost-stories till the girls shriek; of stolid Germans, who come to learn one thing, and, having mastered that much, stolidly go away and copy pictures for evermore. Dick listened enraptured because it was Maisie who spoke. He knew the old life.

'It hasn't changed much,' he said. 'Do they still steal colours at lunch-time?'

'Not steal. Attract is the word. Of course they do. I'm good—I only attract ultramarine; but there are students who'd attract flake-white.'

'I've done it myself. You can't help it when the palettes are hung up. Every colour is common property once it runs down,—even though you do start it with a drop of oil. It teaches people not to waste their tubes.'

'I should like to attract some of your colours, Dick. Perhaps I might catch your success with them.'

'I mustn't say a bad word, but I should like to. What in the world, which you've just missed a lovely chance of seeing, does success or want of success, or a three-storied success, matter compared with—No, I won't open that question again. It's time to go back to town.'

'I'm sorry, Dick, but—'

'You're much more interested in that than you are in me.'

'I don't know. I don't think I am.'

'What will you give me if I tell you a sure short-cut to everything you want,—the trouble and the fuss and the tangle and all the rest? Will you promise to obey me?'

'Of course.'

'In the first place, you must never forget a meal because you happen to be at work. You forgot your lunch twice last week,' said Dick, at a venture, for he knew with whom he was dealing.

'No, no,—only once, really.'

'That's bad enough. And you mustn't take a cup of tea and a biscuit in place of a regular dinner, because dinner happens to be a trouble.'

'You're making fun of me!'

'I never was more in earnest in my life. Oh, my love, my love, hasn't it dawned on you yet what you are to me? Here's the whole earth in a conspiracy to give you a chill, or run over you, or drench you to the skin, or cheat you out of your money, or let you die of overwork and underfeeding, and I haven't the mere right to look after you. Why, I don't even know if you have sense enough to put on warm things when the weather's cold.'

'Dick, you're the most awful boy to talk to—really! How do you suppose I managed when you were away?'

'I wasn't here, and I didn't know. But now I'm back I'd give everything I have for the right of telling you to come in out of the rain.'

'Your success too?'

This time it cost Dick a severe struggle to refrain from bad words.

'As Mrs. Jennett used to say, you're a trial, Maisie!

You've been cooped up in the schools too long, and you think every one is looking at you. There aren't twelve hundred people in the world who understand pictures. The others pretend and don't care. Remember, I've seen twelve hundred men dead in toadstool-beds. It's only the voice of the tiniest little fraction of people that makes success. The real world doesn't care a tinker's—doesn't care a bit. For aught you or I know, every man in the world may be arguing with a Maisie of his own.'

'Poor Maisie!'

'Poor Dick, I think. Do you believe while he's fighting for what's dearer than his life he wants to look at a picture? And even if he did, and if all the world did, and a thousand million people rose up and shouted hymns to my honour and glory, would that make up to me for the knowledge that you were out shopping in the Edgware Road on a rainy day without an umbrella? Now we'll go to the station.'

'But you said on the beach—' persisted Maisie with a certain fear.

Dick groaned aloud: 'Yes, I know what I said. My work is everything I have, or am, or hope to be, to me, and I believe I've learnt the law that governs it; but I've some lingering sense of fun left,—though you've nearly knocked it out of me. I can just see that it isn't everything to all the world. "Do what I say, and not what I do." '

Maisie was careful not to reopen debatable matters, and they returned to London joyously. The terminus stopped Dick in the midst of an eloquent harangue on the beauties of exercise. He would buy Maisie a horse,—such a horse as never yet bowed head to bit,—would stable it, with a companion, some twenty miles from

London, and Maisie, solely for her health's sake, should ride with him twice or thrice a week.

'That's absurd,' said she. 'It wouldn't be proper.'

'Now, who in all London to-night would have sufficient interest or audacity to call us two to account for anything we chose to do?'

Maisie looked at the lamps, the fog, and the hideous turmoil. Dick was right; but horseflesh did not make for Art as she understood it.

'You're very nice sometimes, but you're very foolish more times. I'm not going to let you give me horses, or take you out of your way to-night. I'll go home by myself. Only I want you to promise me something. You won't think any more about that extra threepence, will you? Remember, you've been paid; and I won't allow you to be spiteful and do bad work for a little thing like that. You can be so big that you mustn't be tiny.'

This was turning the tables with a vengeance. There remained only to put Maisie into her hansom.

'Good-bye,' she said simply. 'You'll come on Sunday. It has been a beautiful day, Dick. Why can't it be like this always?'

'Because love's like line-work: you must go forward or backward; you can't stand still. By the way, go on with your line-work. Good-night, and, for my—for any sake, take care of yourself.'

He turned to walk home, meditating. The day had brought him nothing that he hoped for, but—surely this was worth many days—it had brought him nearer to Maisie. The end was only a question of time now, and the prize well worth the waiting. By instinct, once more, he turned to the river.

'And she understood at once,' he said, looking at the

water. 'She found out my pet besetting sin on the spot and paid it off. My God, how she understood! And she said I was better than she was! Better than she was!' He laughed at the absurdity of the notion. 'I wonder if girls guess at one-half a man's life. They can't, or—they wouldn't marry us.' He took her gift out of his pocket, and considered it in the light of a miracle and a pledge of the comprehension that, one day, would lead to perfect happiness. Meantime Maisie was alone in London, with none to save her from danger. And the packed wilderness was very full of danger.

Dick made his prayer to Fate disjointedly after the manner of the heathen as he threw the piece of silver into the river. If any evil were to befall, let him bear the burden and let Maisie go unscathed, since the threepenny piece was dearest to him of all his possessions. It was a small coin in itself, but Maisie had given it, and the Thames held it, and surely the Fates would be bribed for this once.

The drowning of the coin seemed to cut him free from thought of Maisie for the moment. He took himself off the bridge and went whistling to his chambers with a strong yearning for some man-talk and tobacco after his first experience of an entire day spent in the society of a woman. There was a stronger desire at his heart when there rose before him an unsolicited vision of the 'Barralong' dipping deep and sailing free for the Southern Cross.

CHAPTER VIII

And these two, as I have told you,
Were the friends of Hiawatha,
Chibiabos, the musician,
And the very strong man, Kwasind.
'Hiawatha.'

TORPENHOW was paging the last sheets of some manuscript, while the Nilghai, who had come for chess and remained to talk tactics, was reading through the first part, commenting scornfully the while.

'It's picturesque enough and it's sketchy,' said he; 'but as a serious consideration of affairs in Eastern Europe, it's not worth much.'

'It's off my hands at any rate. . . . Thirty-seven, thirty-eight, thirty-nine slips altogether, aren't there? That should make between eleven and twelve pages of valuable misinformation. Heigho!' Torpenhow shuffled the writing together and hummed—

'Young lambs to sell, young lambs to sell,
If I'd as much money as I could tell,
I never would cry, Young lambs to sell!'

Dick entered, self-conscious and a little defiant, but in the best of tempers with all the world.

'Back at last?' said Torpenhow.

'More or less. What have you been doing?'

'Work. Dickie, you behave as though the Bank of England were behind you. Here's Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday gone and you haven't done a line. It's scandalous.'

'The notions come and go, my children—they come and go like our 'baccy,' he answered, filling his pipe. 'Moreover,' he stooped to thrust a spill into the grate, 'Apollo does not always stretch his—Oh, confound your clumsy jests, Nilghai!'

'This is not the place to preach the theory of direct inspiration,' said the Nilghai, returning Torpenhow's large and workmanlike bellows to their nail on the wall. 'We believe in cobblers' wax. La!—where you sit down.'

'If you weren't so big and fat,' said Dick, looking round for a weapon, 'I'd—'

'No skylarking in my rooms. You two smashed half my furniture last time you threw cushions about. You might have the decency to say How d'you do? to Binkie. Look at him.'

Binkie had jumped down from the sofa and was fawning round Dick's knee, and scratching at his boots.

'Dear man!' said Dickie, snatching him up, and kissing him on the black patch above his right eye. 'Did ums was, Binks? Did that ugly Nilghai turn you off the sofa? Bite him, Mr. Binkle.' He pitched him on the Nilghai's stomach, as the big man lay at ease, and Binkie pretended to destroy the Nilghai inch by inch, till a sofa-cushion extinguished him, and panting he stuck out his tongue at the company.

'The Binkie-boy went for a walk this morning before you were up, Torp. I saw him making love to the butcher at the corner when the shutters were being taken down—

just as if he hadn't enough to eat in his own proper house,' said Dick.

'Binks, is that a true bill?' said Torpenhow severely. The little dog retreated under the sofa-cushion, and showed by the fat white back of him that he really had no further interest in the discussion.

''Strikes me that another disreputable dog went for a walk, too,' said the Nilghai. 'What made you get up so early? Torp said you might be buying a horse?'

'He knows it would need three of us for a serious business like that. No, I felt lonesome and unhappy, so I went out to look at the sea, and watch the pretty ships go by.'

'Where did you go?'

'Somewhere on the Channel. Progly or Snigly, or some one-horse watering-place was its name; I've forgotten; but it was only two hours' run from London and the ships went by.'

'Did you see anything you knew?'

'Only the "Barralong" outwards to Australia, and an Odessa grain-boat loaded down by the head. It was a thick day, but the sea smelt good.'

'Wherefore put on one's best trousers to see the "Barralong"?' said Torpenhow, pointing.

'Because I've nothing except these things and my painting duds. Besides, I wanted to do honour to the sea.'

'Did she make you feel restless?' asked the Nilghai keenly.

'Crazy. Don't speak of it. I'm sorry I went.'

Torpenhow and the Nilghai exchanged a look as Dick, stooping, busied himself among the former's boots and trees.

'These will do,' he said at last; 'I can't say I think much of your taste in slippers, but the fit's the thing.' He slipped his feet into a pair of socklike sambhur-skin foot coverings, found a long chair, and lay at length.

'They're my own pet pair,' Torpenhow said. 'I was just going to put them on myself.'

''All your reprehensible selfishness. Just because you see me happy for a minute you want to worry me and stir me up. Find another pair.'

'Good for you that Dick can't wear your clothes, Torp. You two live communistically,' said the Nilghai. 'Dick never has anything that I can wear. He's only useful to sponge upon.'

'Confound you, have you been rummaging round among my caches, then?' said Dick. 'I put a sovereign in the tobacco-jar yesterday. How do you expect a man to keep his accounts properly if you—'

Here the Nilghai began to laugh, and Torpenhow joined him.

'Hid a sovereign yesterday! You're no sort of a financier. You lent me a fiver about a month back. Do you remember?' Torpenhow said.

'Yes, of course.'

'Do you remember that I paid it you ten days later, and you put it at the bottom of the tobacco?'

'By Jove, did I? I thought it was in one of my colour boxes.'

'You thought! About a week ago I went into your studio to get some 'baccy and found it.'

'What did you do with it?'

'Took the Nilghai to a theatre and fed him.'

'You couldn't feed the Nilghai under twice the money —not though you gave him Army beef. Well, I sup-

pose I should have found it out sooner or later. What is there to laugh at?'

'You're a most amazing cuckoo in many directions,' said the Nilghai, still chuckling over the thought of the dinner. 'Never mind. We had both been working very hard, and it was your unearned increment we spent, and as you're only a loafer it didn't matter.'

'That's pleasant—from the man who is bursting with my meat, too. I'll get that dinner back one of these days. Suppose we go to a theatre now.'

''Put our boots on,—and dress,—and wash?' The Nilghai spoke very lazily.

'I withdraw the motion.'

'Suppose, just for a change—as a startling variety, you know—we, that is to say we, get our charcoal and our canvas and go on with our work.' Torpenhow spoke pointedly, but Dick only wriggled his toes inside the soft leather moccasins.

'What a one-idea'd clucker it is! If I had any unfinished figures on hand, I haven't any model; if I had my model, I haven't any spray, and I never leave charcoal unfixed over night; and if I had my spray and twenty photographs of backgrounds, I couldn't do anything to-night. I don't feel that way.'

'Binkie-dog, he's a lazy hog, isn't he?' said the Nilghai.

'Very good, I will do some work,' said Dick, rising swiftly. 'I'll fetch the Nungapunga Book, and we'll add another picture to the Nilghai Saga.'

'Aren't you worrying him a little too much?' asked the Nilghai, when Dick had left the room.

'Perhaps, but I know what he can turn out if he likes. It makes me savage to hear him praised for past work

when I know what he ought to do. You and I are arranged for—'

'By Kismet and our own powers, more's the pity. I have dreamed of a good deal.'

'So have I, but we know our limitations now. I'm dashed if I know what Dick's may be when he gives himself to his work. That's what makes me so keen about him.'

'And when all's said and done, you will be put aside—quite rightly—for a female girl.'

'I wonder . . . Where do you think he has been to-day?'

'To the sea. Didn't you see the look in his eyes when he talked about her? He's as restless as a swallow in autumn.'

'Yes; but did he go alone?'

'I don't know, and I don't care, but he has the beginnings of the go-fever upon him. He wants to up-stakes and move out. There's no mistaking the signs. Whatever he may have said before, he has the call upon him now.'

'It might be his salvation,' Torpenhow said.

'Perhaps—if you care to take the responsibility of being a saviour: I'm averse to tampering with souls myself.'

Dick returned with a great clasped sketch-book that the Nilghai knew well and did not love too much. In it Dick had drawn in his playtime all manner of moving incidents, experienced by himself or related to him by the others, of all the four corners of the earth. But the wider range of the Nilghai's body and life attracted him most. When truth failed here he fell back on fiction of the wildest, and represented incidents in the Nilghai's career that were unseemly,—his marriages with many African princesses, his shameless betrayal, for Arab wives, of army corps to the Mahdi, his tattooment by skilled operators in Burmah, his interview (and his fears) with the

yellow headsman in the blood-stained execution-ground of Canton, and finally, the passings of his spirit into the bodies of whales, elephants, and toucans. Torpenhow from time to time had added rhymed descriptions, and the whole was a curious piece of art, because Dick decided, having regard to the name of the book, which being interpreted means 'naked,' that it would be wrong to draw the Nilghai with any clothes on, under any circumstances. Consequently the last sketch, representing that much-enduring man calling on the War Office to press his claims to the Egyptian medal, was hardly delicate. He settled himself comfortably at Torpenhow's table and turned over the pages.

'What a fortune you would have been to Blake, Nilghai!' he said. 'There's a succulent pinkness about some of these sketches that's more than lifelike. "The Nilghai surrounded while bathing by the Mahdieh"—that was founded on fact, eh?'

'It was very nearly my last bath, you irreverent dauber. Has Binkie come into the Saga yet?'

'No; the Binkie-boy hasn't done anything except eat and kill cats. Let's see. Here you are as a stained-glass saint in a church. 'Deuced decorative lines about your anatomy; you ought to be grateful for being handed down to posterity in this way. Fifty years hence you'll exist in rare and curious facsimiles at ten guineas each. What shall I try this time? The domestic life of the Nilghai?'

''Hasn't got any.'

'The undomestic life of the Nilghai, then. Of course. Mass-meeting of his wives in Trafalgar Square. That's it. They came from the ends of the earth to attend Nilghai's wedding to an English bride. This shall be in sepia. It's a sweet material to work with.'

'It's a scandalous waste of time,' said Torpenhow.

'Don't worry; it keeps one's hand in—specially when you begin without the pencil.' He set to work rapidly. 'That's Nelson's Column. Presently the Nilghai will appear shinning up it.'

'Give him some clothes this time.'

'Certainly—a veil and an orange-wreath, because he's been married.'

'Gad, that's clever enough!' said Torpenhow over his shoulder, as Dick brought out of the paper with three twirls of the brush a very fat back and labouring shoulder pressed against the stone.

'Just imagine,' Dick continued, 'if we could publish a few of these dear little things every time the Nilghai subsidises a man who can write, to give the public an honest opinion of my pictures.'

'Well, you'll admit I always tell you when I have done anything of that kind. I know I can't hammer you as you ought to be hammered, so I give the job to another. Young Maclagan, for instance—'

'No-o—one half-minute, old man; stick your hand out against the dark of the wall-paper—you only burble and call me names. That left shoulder's out of drawing. I must literally throw a veil over that. Where's my pen-knife? Well, what about Maclagan?'

'I only gave him his riding-orders to—to lambast you on general principles for not producing work that will last.'

'Whereupon that young fool,'—Dick threw back his head and shut one eye as he shifted the page under his hand,—'being left alone with an ink-pot and what he conceived were his own notions, went and spilt them both over me in the papers. You might have engaged

a grown man for the business, Nilghai. How do you think the bridal veil looks now, Torp?'

'How the deuce do three dabs and two scratches make the stuff stand away from the body as it does?' said Torpenhow, to whom Dick's methods were always new.

'It just depends on where you put 'em. If Maclagan had known that much about his business he might have done better.'

'Why don't you put the damned dabs into something that will stay, then?' insisted the Nilghai, who had really taken considerable trouble in hiring for Dick's benefit the pen of a young gentleman who devoted most of his waking hours to an anxious consideration of the aims and ends of Art, which, he wrote, was One and Indivisible.

'Wait a minute till I see how I am going to manage my procession of wives. You seem to have married extensively, and I must rough 'em in with the pencil—Medes, Parthians, Edomites. . . . Now, setting aside the weakness and the wickedness and—and the fat-headedness of deliberately trying to do work that will live, as they call it, I'm content with the knowledge that I've done my best up to date, and I shan't do anything like it again for some hours at least—probably years. Most probably never.'

'What! 'Any stuff you have in stock your best work?' said Torpenhow.

'Anything you've sold?' said the Nilghai.

'Oh, no. It isn't here and it isn't sold. Better than that, it can't be sold, and I don't think any one knows where it is. I'm sure I don't. . . . And yet more and more wives, on the north side of the square. Observe the virtuous horror of the lions!'

'You may as well explain,' said Torpenhow, and Dick lifted his head from the paper.

'The sea reminded me of it,' he said slowly. 'I wish it hadn't. It weighs some few thousand tons—unless you cut it out with a cold chisel.'

'Don't be an idiot. You can't pose with us here,' said the Nilghai.

'There's no pose in the matter at all. It's a fact. I was loafing from Lima to Auckland in a big, old, condemned passenger-ship turned into a cargo-boat and owned by a second-hand Italian firm. She was a crazy basket. We were cut down to fifteen ton of coal a day, and we thought ourselves lucky when we kicked seven knots an hour out of her. Then we used to stop and let the bearings cool down, and wonder whether the crack in the shaft was spreading.'

'Were you a steward or a stoker in those days?'

'I was flush for the time being, so I was a passenger, or else I should have been a steward, I think,' said Dick with perfect gravity, returning to the procession of angry wives. 'I was the only other passenger from Lima, and the ship was half empty, and full of rats and cockroaches and scorpions.'

'But what has this to do with the picture?'

'Wait a minute. She had been in the China passenger trade and her lower deck had bunks for two thousand pigtails. Those were all taken down, and she was empty up to her nose, and the lights came through the port-holes—most annoying lights to work in till you got used to them. I hadn't anything to do for weeks. The ship's charts were in pieces and our skipper daren't run south for fear of catching a storm. So he did his best to knock all the Society Islands out of the water one by

one, and I went into the lower deck, and did my picture on the port side as far forward in her as I could go. There was some brown paint and some green paint that they used for the boats, and some black paint for iron-work, and that was all I had.'

'The passengers must have thought you mad.'

'There was only one, and it was a woman; but it gave me the notion of my picture.'

'What was she like?' said Torpenhow.

'She was a sort of Negroid-Jewess-Cuban; with morals to match. She couldn't read or write, and she didn't want to, but she used to come down and watch me paint, and the skipper didn't like it, because he was paying her passage and had to be on the bridge occasionally.'

'I see. That must have been cheerful.'

'It was the best time I ever had. To begin with, we didn't know whether we should go up or go down any minute when there was a sea on; and when it was calm it was paradise; and the woman used to mix the paints and talk broken English, and the skipper used to steal down every few minutes to the lower deck, because he said he was afraid of fire. So, you see, we could never tell when we might be caught, and I had a splendid notion to work out in only three keys of colour.'

'What was the notion?'

'Two lines in Poe—'

'Neither the angels in Heaven above nor the demons down under the sea,
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul of the beautiful Annabel Lee.

It came out of the sea—all by itself. I drew that fight, fought out in green water over the naked, choking soul,

and the woman served as the model for the devils and the angels both—sea-devils and sea-angels, and the soul half drowned between them. It doesn't sound much, but when there was a good light on the lower deck it looked very fine and creepy. It was seven by fourteen feet, all done in shifting light for shifting lights.'

'Did the woman inspire you much?' said Torpenhow.

'She and the sea between them—immensely. There was a heap of bad drawing in that picture. I remember I went out of my way to foreshorten for sheer delight of doing it, and I foreshortened damnably, but for all that it's the best thing I've ever done; and now I suppose the ship's broken up or gone down. Whew! What a time that was!'

'What happened after all?'

'It all ended. They were loading her with wool when I left the ship, but even the stevedores kept the picture clear to the last. The eyes of the demons scared them, I honestly believe.'

'And the woman?'

'She was scared too when it was finished. She used to cross herself before she went down to look at it. Just three colours and no chance of getting any more, and the sea outside and unlimited love-making inside, and the fear of death atop of everything else, O Lord!' He had ceased to look at the sketch, but was staring straight in front of him across the room.

'Why don't you try something of the same kind now?' said the Nilghai.

'Because those things come not by fasting and prayer. When I find a cargo-boat and a Jewess-Cuban and another notion and the same old life, I may.'

'You won't find them here,' said the Nilghai.

'No, I shall not.' Dick shut the sketch-book with a bang. 'This room's as hot as an oven. Open the window, some one.'

He leaned into the darkness, watching the greater darkness of London below him. The chambers stood much higher than the other houses, commanding a hundred chimneys—crooked cowls that looked like sitting cats as they swung round, and other uncouth brick and zinc mysteries supported by iron stanchions and clamped by S-pieces. Northward the lights of Piccadilly Circus and Leicester Square threw a copper-coloured glare above the black roofs, and southward lay all the orderly lights of the Thames. A train rolled out across one of the railway bridges, and its thunder drowned for a minute the dull roar of the streets. The Nilghai looked at his watch and said shortly, 'That's the Paris night-mail. You can book from here to St. Petersburg if you choose.'

Dick crammed head and shoulders out of the window and looked across the river. Torpenhow came to his side, while the Nilghai passed over quietly to the piano and opened it. Binkie, making himself as large as possible, spread out upon the sofa with the air of one who is not to be lightly disturbed.

'Well,' said the Nilghai to the two pairs of shoulders, 'have you never seen this place before?'

A steam-tug on the river hooted as she towed her barges to wharf. Then the boom of the traffic came into the room. Torpenhow nudged Dick. 'Good place to bank in—bad place to bunk in, Dickie, isn't it?'

Dick's chin was in his hand as he answered, in the words of a general not without fame, still looking out on the darkness—' "My God, what a city to loot!" '

Binkie found the night air tickling his whiskers and sneezed plaintively.

'We shall give the Binkie-dog a cold,' said Torpenhow. 'Come in,' and they withdrew their heads. 'You'll be buried in Kensal Green, Dick, one of these days, if it isn't closed by the time you want to go there—buried within two feet of some one else, his wife and his family.'

'Allah forbid! I shall get away before that time comes. Give a man room to stretch his legs, Mr. Binkle.' Dick flung himself down on the sofa and tweaked Binkie's velvet ears, yawning heavily the while.

'You'll find that wardrobe-case very much out of tune,' Torpenhow said to the Nilghai. 'It's never touched except by you.'

'A piece of gross extravagance,' Dick grunted. 'The Nilghai only comes when I'm out.'

'That's because you're always out. Howl, Nilghai, and let him hear.'

'The life of the Nilghai is fraud and slaughter,
His writings are watered Dickens and water;
But the voice of the Nilghai raised on high
Makes even the Mahdieh glad to die!'

Dick quoted from Torpenhow's letterpress in the Nungapunga Book. 'How do they call moose in Canada, Nilghai?'

The man laughed. Singing was his one polite accomplishment, as many Press-tents in far-off lands had known.

'What shall I sing?' said he, turning in the chair.

' "Moll Roe in the Morning," ' said Torpenhow at a venture.

'No,' said Dick sharply, and the Nilghai opened his eyes. The old chanty whereof he, among a very few,

possessed all the words was not a pretty one, but Dick had heard it many times before without wincing. Without prelude he launched into that stately tune that calls together and troubles the hearts of the gipsies of the sea—

'Farewell and adieu to you, Spanish ladies,
Farewell and adieu to you, ladies of Spain.'

Dick turned uneasily on the sofa, for he could hear the bows of the 'Barralong' crashing into the green seas on her way to the Southern Cross. Then came the chorus—

'We'll rant and we'll roar like true British sailors,
We'll rant and we'll roar across the salt seas,
Until we take soundings in the Channel of Old England
From Ushant to Scilly 'tis forty-five leagues.'

'Thirty-five — thirty-five,' said Dick petulantly. 'Don't tamper with Holy Writ. Go on, Nilghai.'

'The first land we made it was called the Deadman,'

and they sang to the end very vigorously.

'That would be a better song if her head were turned the other way—to the Ushant light, for instance,' said the Nilghai.

'Flinging its arms about like a mad windmill,' said Torpenhow. 'Give us something else, Nilghai. You're in fine fog-horn form to-night.'

'Give us the "Ganges Pilot": you sang that in the square the night before El-Maghrib. By the way, I wonder how many of the chorus are alive to-night,' said Dick.

Torpenhow considered for a minute. 'By Jove! I believe only you and I. Raynor, Vickery, and Deenes —all dead; Vincent caught smallpox in Cairo, carried it here and died of it. Yes, only you and I and the Nilghai.'

'Umph! And yet the men here who've done their work in a well-warmed studio all their lives, with a policeman at each corner, say that I charge too much for my pictures.'

'They are buying your work, not your insurance policies, dear child,' said the Nilghai.

'I gambled with one to get at the other. Don't preach. Go on with the "Pilot." Where in the world did you get that song?'

'On a tombstone,' said the Nilghai. 'On a tombstone in a distant land. I made it an accompaniment with heaps of bass chords.'

'Oh, Vanity! Begin.' And the Nilghai began—

'I have slipped my cable, messmates, I'm drifting down with the tide,
I have my sailing orders, while ye at anchor ride.
And never on fair June morning have I put out to sea
With clearer conscience or better hope, or a heart more light and free.

'Shoulder to shoulder, Joe, my boy, into the crowd like a wedge
Strike with the hangers, messmates, but do not cut with the edge.
Cries Charnock, "Scatter the faggots, double that Brahmin in two,
The tall pale widow for me, Joe, the little brown girl for you!"

'Young Joe (you're nearing sixty), why is your hide so dark?
Katie has soft fair blue eyes, who blackened yours?—
Why, hark!'

They were all singing now, Dick with the roar of the wind of the open sea about his ears as the deep bass voice let itself go.

'The morning gun—Ho, steady!—the arquebuses to me!
I ha' sounded the Dutch High Admiral's heart as my
lead doth sound the sea.

'Sounding, sounding the Ganges, floating down with the
tide,
Moor me close to Charnock, next to my nut-brown bride.
My blessing to Kate at Fairlight—Holwell, my thanks
to you;
Steady! We steer for Heaven, through sand-drifts cold
and blue.'

'Now what is there in that nonsense to make a man restless?' said Dick, hauling Binkie from his feet to his chest.

'It depends on the man,' said Torpenhow.

'The man who has been down to look at the sea,' said the Nilghai.

'I didn't know she was going to upset me in this fashion.'

'That's what men say when they go to say good-bye to a woman. It's more easy, though, to get rid of three women than a piece of one's life and surroundings.'

'But a woman can be—' began Dick unguardedly.

'A piece of one's life,' continued Torpenhow. 'No, she can't.' His face darkened for a moment. 'She says she wants to sympathise with you and help you in your work, and everything else that clearly a man must do for himself. Then she sends round five notes a day to ask why the dickens you haven't been wasting your time with her.'

'Don't generalise,' said the Nilghai. 'By the time you arrive at five notes a day you must have gone through a good deal and behaved accordingly. 'Shouldn't begin these things, my son.'

'I shouldn't have gone down to the sea,' said Dick, just a little anxious to change the conversation. 'And you shouldn't have sung.'

'The sea isn't sending you five notes a day,' said the Nilghai.

'No, but I'm fatally compromised. She's an enduring old hag, and I'm sorry I ever met her. Why wasn't I born and bred and dead in a three-pair back?'

'Hear him blaspheming his first love! Why in the world shouldn't you listen to her?' said Torpenhow.

Before Dick could reply the Nilghai lifted up his voice with a shout that shook the windows, in 'The Men of the Sea,' that begins, as all know, 'The sea is a wicked old woman,' and after racing through eight lines whose imagery is truthful, ends in a refrain, slow as the clacking of a capstan when the boat comes unwillingly up to the bars where the men sweat and tramp in the shingle.

' "Ye that bore us, O restore us!
She is kinder than ye;
For the call is on our heart-strings!"
Said The Men of the Sea.'

The Nilghai sang that verse twice, with simple craft, intending that Dick should hear. But Dick was waiting for the farewell of the men to their wives.

' "Ye that love us, can ye move us?
She is dearer than ye;
And your sleep will be the sweeter,"
Said The Men of the Sea.'

The rough words beat like the blows of the waves on the bows of the rickety boat from Lima in the days when Dick was mixing paints, making love, drawing devils and angels in the half dark, and wondering whether the next minute would place the Italian captain's knife between his shoulder-blades. And the go-fever, which is more real than many doctors' diseases, waked and raged, urging him who loved Maisie beyond anything in the world to go away and taste the old hot, unregenerate life again,—to scuffle, swear, gamble, and love light loves with his fellows; to take ship and know the sea once more, and by her beget pictures; to talk to Binat among the sands of Port Said while Yellow 'Tina mixed the drinks; to hear the crackle of musketry, and see the smoke roll outward, thin and thicken again till the shining black faces came through, and in that hell every man was strictly responsible for his own head, and his own alone, and struck with an unfettered arm. It was impossible, utterly impossible, but—

> ' "Oh, our fathers, in the churchyard,
> She is older than ye,
> And our graves will be the greener,"
> Said The Men of the Sea.'

'What is there to hinder?' said Torpenhow, in the long hush that followed the song.

'You said a little time since that you wouldn't come for a walk round the world, Torp.'

'That was months ago, and I only objected to your making money for travelling expenses. You've shot your bolt here and it has gone home. Go away and do some work, and see some things.'

'Get some of the fat off you; you're disgracefully out

of condition,' said the Nilghai, making a plunge from the chair and grasping a handful of Dick generally over the right ribs. 'Soft as putty—pure tallow born of overfeeding. Train it off, Dickie.'

'We're all equally gross, Nilghai. Next time you have to take the field you'll sit down, wink your eyes, gasp, and die in a fit.'

'Never mind. You go away on a ship. Go to Lima again, or to Brazil. There's always trouble in South America.'

'Do you suppose I want to be told where to go? Great Heavens, the only difficulty is to know where I'm to stop. But I shall stay here, as I told you before.'

'Then you'll be buried in Kensal Green and turn into adipocere with the others,' said Torpenhow. 'Are you thinking of commissions in hand? Pay forfeit and go. You've money enough to travel as a king if you please.'

'You've the grisliest notions of amusement, Torp. I think I see myself shipping first class on a six-thousand-ton hotel, and asking the third engineer what makes the engines go round, and whether it isn't very warm in the stokehold. Ho! ho! I should ship as a loafer if ever I shipped at all, which I'm not going to do. I shall compromise, and go for a small trip to begin with.'

'That's something at any rate. Where will you go?' said Torpenhow. 'It would do you all the good in the world, old man.'

The Nilghai saw the twinkle in Dick's eye and refrained from speech.

'I shall go in the first place to Rathray's stable, where I shall hire one horse, and take him very carefully as far as Richmond Hill. Then I shall walk him back again, in case he should accidentally burst into a lather and make

Rathray angry. I shall do that to-morrow for the sake of air and exercise.'

'Bah!' Dick had barely time to throw up his arm and ward off the cushion that the disgusted Torpenhow heaved at his head.

'Air and exercise indeed,' said the Nilghai, sitting down heavily on Dick. 'Let's give him a little of both. Get the bellows, Torp.'

At this point the conference broke up in disorder, because Dick would not open his mouth till the Nilghai held his nose fast, and there was some trouble in forcing the nozzle of the bellows between his teeth; and even when it was there he weakly tried to puff against the force of the blast, and his cheeks blew up with a great explosion; and the enemy becoming helpless with laughter he so beat them over the head with a soft sofa-cushion that that became unsewn and distributed its feathers, and Binkie, interfering in Torpenhow's interests, was bundled into the half-empty bag and advised to scratch his way out, which he did after a while, travelling rapidly up and down the floor in the shape of an agitated green haggis, and when he came out looking for satisfaction, the three pillars of his world were picking feathers out of their hair.

'A prophet has no honour in his own country,' said Dick ruefully, dusting his knees. 'This filthy fluff will never brush off my bags.'

'It was all for your good,' said the Nilghai. ''Nothing like air and exercise.'

'All for your good,' said Torpenhow, not in the least with reference to past clowning. 'It would let you focus things at their proper worth and prevent your becoming slack in this hothouse of a town. Indeed it

would, old man. I shouldn't have spoken if I hadn't thought so. Only, you make a joke of everything.'

'Before God I do no such thing,' said Dick quickly and earnestly. 'You don't know me if you think that.'

'I don't think it,' said the Nilghai.

'How can fellows like ourselves, who know what life and death really mean, dare to make a joke of anything? I know we pretend it, to save ourselves from breaking down or going to the other extreme. Can't I see, old man, how you're always anxious about me, and try to advise me to make my work better? Do you suppose I don't think about that myself? But you can't help me —you can't help me—not even you. I must play my own hand alone in my own way.'

'Hear, hear,' from the Nilghai.

'What's the one thing in the Nilghai Saga that I've never drawn in the Nungapunga Book?' Dick continued to Torpenhow, who was a little astonished at the outburst.

Now there was one blank page in the book given over to the sketch that Dick had not drawn of the crowning exploit in the Nilghai's life; when that man, being young and forgetting that his body and bones belonged to the paper that employed him, had ridden over sunburned slippery grass in the rear of Bredow's brigade on the day that the troopers flung themselves at Canrobert's artillery, and for aught they knew twenty battalions in front, to save the battered 24th German Infantry, to give time to decide the fate of Vionville, and to learn ere their remnant came back to Flavigny that cavalry can attack and crumple and break unshaken infantry. Whenever he was inclined to think over a life that might have been better, an income that might have been larger, and a soul

that might have been considerably cleaner, the Nilghai would comfort himself with the thought, 'I rode with Bredow's brigade at Vionville,' and take heart for any lesser battle the next day might bring.

'I know,' he said very gravely. 'I was always glad that you left it out.'

'I left it out because Nilghai taught me what the German army learned then, and what Schmidt taught their cavalry. I don't know German. What is it? "Take care of the time and the dressing will take care of itself." I must ride my own line to my own beat, old man.'

'Tempo ist Richtung. You've learned your lesson well,' said the Nilghai. 'He must go alone. He speaks truth, Torp.'

'Maybe I'm as wrong as I can be—hideously wrong. I must find that out for myself, as I have to think things out for myself, but I daren't turn my head to dress by the next man. It hurts me a great deal more than you know not to be able to go, but I cannot, that's all. I must do my own work and live my own life in my own way, because I'm responsible for both. Only don't think I frivol about it, Torp. I have my own matches and sulphur, and I'll make my own hell, thanks.'

There was an uncomfortable pause. Then Torpenhow said blandly, 'What did the Governor of North Carolina say to the Governor of South Carolina?'

'Excellent notion. It is a long time between drinks. There are the makings of a very fine prig in you, Dick,' said the Nilghai.

'I've liberated my mind, estimable Binkie, with the feathers in his mouth.' Dick picked up the still indignant one and shook him tenderly. 'You're tied up in a sack and made to run about blind, Binkie-wee, without

any reason, and it has hurt your little feelings. Never mind. Sic volo, sic jubeo, stet pro ratione voluntas, and don't sneeze in my eye because I talk Latin. Good-night.'

He went out of the room.

'That's distinctly one for you,' said the Nilghai. 'I told you it was hopeless to meddle with him. He's not pleased.'

'He'd swear at me if he weren't. I can't make it out. He has the go-fever upon him and he won't go. I only hope that he mayn't have to go some day when he doesn't want to,' said Torpenhow.

. . . . . .

In his own room Dick was settling a question with himself—and the question was whether all the world, and all that was therein, and a burning desire to exploit both, was worth one threepenny piece thrown into the Thames.

'It came of seeing the sea, and I'm a cur to think about it,' he decided. 'After all the honeymoon will be that tour—with reservations; only . . . only I didn't realise that the sea was so strong. I didn't feel it so much when I was with Maisie. These damnable songs did it. He's beginning again.'

But it was only Herrick's Nightpiece to Julia that the Nilghai sang, and before it was ended Dick reappeared on the threshold, not altogether clothed indeed, but in his right mind, thirsty and at peace.

The mood had come and gone with the rising and the falling of the tide by Fort Keeling.

CHAPTER IX

'If I have taken the common clay
And wrought it cunningly
In the shape of a god that was digged a clod,
The greater honour to me.'

'If thou hast taken the common clay,
And thy hands be not free
From the taint of the soil, thou hast made thy spoil
The greater shame to thee.'

'The Two Potters.'

HE did no work of any kind for the rest of the week. Then came another Sunday. He dreaded and longed for the day always, but since the red-haired girl had sketched him there was rather more dread than desire in his mind.

He found that Maisie had entirely neglected his suggestions about line-work. She had gone off at score filled with some absurd notion for a 'fancy head.' It cost Dick something to command his temper.

'What's the good of suggesting anything?' he said pointedly.

'Ah, but this will be a picture,—a real picture; and I know that Kami will let me send it to the Salon. You don't mind, do you?'

'I suppose not. But you won't have time for the Salon.'

Maisie hesitated a little. She even felt uncomfortable.

'We're going over to France a month sooner because of it. I shall get the idea sketched out here and work it up at Kami's.'

Dick's heart stood still, and he came very near to being disgusted with his queen who could do no wrong. 'Just when I thought I had made some headway, she goes off chasing butterflies. It's too maddening!'

There was no possibility of arguing, for the red-haired girl was in the studio. Dick could only look unutterable reproach.

'I'm sorry,' he said, 'and I think you make a mistake. But what's the idea of your new picture?'

'I took it from a book.'

'That's bad, to begin with. Books aren't the places for pictures. And—'

'It's this,' said the red-haired girl behind him. 'I was reading it to Maisie the other day from "The City of Dreadful Night." D'you know the book?'

'A little. I am sorry I spoke. There are pictures in it. What has taken her fancy?'

'The description of the Melancolia—

'Her folded wings as of a mighty eagle,
But all too impotent to lift the regal
Robustness of her earth-born strength and pride.

And here again. (Maisie, get the tea, dear.)

'The forehead charged with baleful thoughts and dreams,
The household bunch of keys, the housewife's gown,
Voluminous indented, and yet rigid
As though a shell of burnished metal frigid,
Her feet thick-shod to tread all weakness down.'

There was no attempt to conceal the scorn of the lazy voice. Dick winced.

'But that has been done already by an obscure artist of the name of Durer,' said he. 'How does the poem run?—

'Three centuries and threescore years ago,
With phantasies of his peculiar thought.

You might as well try to rewrite "Hamlet." It will be waste of time.'

'No, it won't,' said Maisie, putting down the teacups with clatter to reassure herself. 'And I mean to do it. Can't you see what a beautiful thing it would make?'

'How in perdition can one do work when one hasn't had the proper training? Any fool can get a notion. It needs training to drive the thing through,—training and conviction; not rushing after the first fancy.' Dick spoke between his teeth.

'You don't understand,' said Maisie. 'I think I can do it.'

Again the voice of the girl behind him—

'Baffled and beaten back, she works on still;
Weary and sick of soul, she works the more.
Sustained by her indomitable will,
The hands shall fashion, and the brain shall pore,
And all her sorrow shall be turned to labour—

I fancy Maisie means to embody herself in the picture.'

'Sitting on a throne of rejected pictures? No, I shan't, dear. The notion in itself has fascinated me.—Of course you don't care for fancy heads, Dick. I don't think you could do them. You like blood and bones.'

'That's a direct challenge. If you can do a Melancolia

that isn't merely a sorrowful female head, I can do a better one; and I will, too. What d'you know about Melancholia?' Dick firmly believed that he was even then tasting three-quarters of all the sorrow in the world.

'She was a woman,' said Maisie, 'and she suffered a great deal,—till she could suffer no more. Then she began to laugh at it all, and then I painted her and sent her to the Salon.'

The red-haired girl rose up and left the room, laughing.

Dick looked at Maisie humbly and hopelessly.

'Never mind about the picture,' he said. 'Are you really going back to Kami's a month before your time?'

'I must, if I want to get the picture done.'

'And that's all you want?'

'Of course. Don't be stupid, Dick.'

'You haven't the power. You have only the ideas—the ideas and the little cheap impulses. How you could have kept at your work for ten years steadily is a mystery to me. So you are really going,—a month before you need?'

'I must do my work.'

'Your work—bah! . . . No, I didn't mean that. It's all right, dear. Of course you must do your work, and—I think I'll say good-bye for this week.'

'Won't you even stay for tea?'

'No, thank you. Have I your leave to go, dear? There's nothing more you particularly want me to do, and the line-work doesn't matter.'

'I wish you could stay, and then we could talk over my picture. If only one single picture's a success it draws attention to all the others. I know some of my work is good, if only people could see. And you needn't have been so rude about it.'

'I'm sorry. We'll talk the Melancolia over some one of the other Sundays. There are four more—yes, one, two, three, four—before you go. Good-bye, Maisie.'

Maisie stood by the studio window, thinking, till the red-haired girl returned, a little white at the corners of her lips.

'Dick's gone off,' said Maisie. 'Just when I wanted to talk about the picture. Isn't it selfish of him?'

Her companion opened her lips as if to speak, shut them again, and went on reading 'The City of Dreadful Night.'

Dick was in the Park, walking round and round a tree that he had chosen as his confidante for many Sundays past. He was swearing audibly, and when he found that the infirmities of the English tongue hemmed in his rage, he sought consolation in Arabic, which is expressly designed for the use of the afflicted. He was not pleased with the reward of his patient service; nor was he pleased with himself; and it was long before he arrived at the proposition that the queen could do no wrong.

'It's a losing game,' he said. 'I'm worth nothing when a whim of hers is in question. But in a losing game at Port Said we used to double the stakes and go on. She do a Melancolia! She hasn't the power, or the insight, or the training. Only the desire. She's cursed with the curse of Reuben. She won't do line-work, because it means real work; and yet she's stronger than I am. I'll make her understand that I can beat her on her own Melancolia. Even then she wouldn't care. She says I can only do blood and bones. I don't believe she has blood in her veins. All the same I love her; and I must go on loving her; and if I can humble her vanity I will. I'll do a Melancolia that shall be something like a Melancolia,

—"the Melancolia that transcends all wit." I'll do it at once, con—bless her.'

He discovered that the notion would not come to order, and that he could not free his mind for an hour from the thought of Maisie's departure. He took very small interest in her rough studies for the Melancolia when she showed them next week. The Sundays were racing past, and the time was at hand when all the church bells in London could not ring Maisie back to him. Once or twice he said something to Binkie about 'hermaphroditic futilities,' but the little dog received so many confidences both from Torpenhow and Dick that he did not trouble his tulip-ears to listen.

Dick was permitted to see the girls off. They were going by the Dover night-boat; and they hoped to return in August. It was then February, and Dick felt that he was being hardly used. Maisie was so busy stripping the small house across the Park, and packing her canvases, that she had no time for thought. Dick went down to Dover and wasted a day there fretting over a wonderful possibility. Would Maisie at the very last allow him one small kiss? He reflected that he might capture her by the strong arm, as he had seen women captured in the Southern Soudan, and lead her away; but Maisie would never be led. She would turn her gray eyes upon him and say, 'Dick, how selfish you are!' Then his courage would fail him. It would be better, after all, to beg for that kiss.

Maisie looked more than usually kissable as she stepped from the night-mail on to the windy pier, in a gray waterproof and a little gray cloth travelling-cap. The red-haired girl was not so lovely. Her green eyes were hollow and her lips were dry. Dick saw the trunks aboard, and

went to Maisie's side in the darkness under the bridge. The mail-bags were thundering into the forehold, and the red-haired girl was watching them.

'You'll have a rough passage to-night,' said Dick. 'It's blowing outside. I suppose I may come over and see you if I'm good?'

'You mustn't. I shall be busy. At least, if I want you I'll send for you. But I shall write from Vitry-sur-Marne. I shall have heaps of things to consult you about. Oh, Dick, you have been so good to me!—so good to me!'

'Thank you for that, dear. It hasn't made any difference, has it?'

'I can't tell a fib. It hasn't—in that way. But don't think I'm not grateful.'

'Damn the gratitude!' said Dick huskily to the paddle-box.

'What's the use of worrying? You know I should ruin your life, and you'd ruin mine, as things are now. You remember what you said when you were so angry that day in the Park? One of us has to be broken. Can't you wait till that day comes?'

'No, love. I want you unbroken—all to myself.'

Maisie shook her head. 'My poor Dick, what can I say?'

'Don't say anything. Give me a kiss? Only one kiss, Maisie. I'll swear I won't take any more. You might as well, and then I can be sure you're grateful.'

Maisie put her cheek forward, and Dick took his reward in the darkness. It was only one kiss, but, since there was no time-limit specified, it was a long one. Maisie wrenched herself free angrily, and Dick stood abashed and tingling from head to heel.

'Good-bye, darling. I didn't mean to scare you. I'm sorry. Only—keep well and do good work,—specially the Melancolia. I'm going to do one, too. Remember me to Kami, and be careful what you drink. Country drinking-water is bad everywhere, but it's worse in France. Write to me if you want anything, and good-bye. Say good-bye to the what-you-call-um girl, and—can't I have another kiss? No. You're quite right. Good-bye.'

A shout told him that it was not seemly to charge up the mail-bag incline. He reached the pier as the steamer began to move off, and he followed her with his heart.

'And there's nothing—nothing in the wide world—to keep us apart except her obstinacy. These Calais night-boats are much too small. I'll get Torp to write to the papers about it. She's beginning to pitch already.'

Maisie stood where Dick had left her till she heard a little gasping cough at her elbow. The red-haired girl's eyes were alight with cold flame.

'He kissed you!' she said. 'How could you let him, when he wasn't anything to you? How dared you take a kiss from him? Oh, Maisie, let's go to the ladies' cabin. I'm sick,—deadly sick.'

'We aren't into open water yet. Go down, dear, and I'll stay here. I don't like the smell of the engines. . . . Poor Dick! He deserved one,—only one. But I didn't think he'd frighten me so.'

Dick returned to town next day just in time for lunch, for which he had telegraphed. To his disgust, there were only empty plates in the studio. He lifted up his voice like the bears in the fairy-tale, and Torpenhow entered, looking very guilty.

'H'sh!' said he. 'Don't make such a noise. I took it. Come into my rooms, and I'll show you why.'

Dick paused amazed at the threshold, for on Torpenhow's sofa lay a girl asleep and breathing heavily. The little cheap sailor-hat, the blue-and-white dress, fitter for June than for February, dabbled with mud at the skirts, the jacket trimmed with imitation Astrakhan and ripped at the shoulder-seams, the one-and-eleven-penny umbrella, and, above all, the disgraceful condition of the kid-topped boots, declared all things.

'Oh, I say, old man, this is too bad! You mustn't bring this sort up here. They steal things from the rooms.'

'It looks bad, I admit, but I was coming in after lunch, and she staggered into the hall. I thought she was drunk at first, but it was collapse. I couldn't leave her as she was, so I brought her up here and gave her your lunch. She was fainting from want of food. She went fast asleep the minute she had finished.'

'I know something of that complaint. She's been living on sausages, I suppose. Torp, you should have handed her over to a policeman for presuming to faint in a respectable house. Poor little wretch. Look at that face! There isn't an ounce of immorality in it. Only folly,—slack, fatuous, feeble, futile folly. It's a typical head. D'you notice how the skull begins to show through the flesh padding on the face and cheek-bone?'

'What a cold-blooded barbarian it is! Don't hit a woman when she's down. Can't we do anything? She was simply dropping with starvation. She almost fell into my arms, and when she got to the food she ate like a wild beast. It was horrible.'

'I can give her money, which she would probably spend in drinks. Is she going to sleep for ever?'

The girl opened her eyes and glared at the men between terror and effrontery.

'"Feeling better?" said Torpenhow.

'Yes. Thank you. There aren't many gentlemen that are as kind as you are. Thank you.'

'When did you leave service?' said Dick, who had been watching the scarred and chapped hands.

'How did you know I was in service? I was. General servant. I didn't like it.'

'And how do you like being your own mistress?'

'Do I look as if I liked it?'

'I suppose not. One moment. Would you be good enough to turn your face to the window?'

The girl obeyed, and Dick watched her face keenly,—so keenly that she made as if to hide behind Torpenhow.

'The eyes have it,' said Dick, walking up and down. 'They are superb eyes for my business. And, after all, every head depends on the eyes. This has been sent from heaven to make up for—what was taken away. Now the weekly strain's off my shoulders, I can get to work in earnest. Evidently sent from heaven. Yes. Raise your chin a little, please.'

'Gently, old man, gently. You're scaring somebody out of her wits,' said Torpenhow, who could see the girl trembling.

'Don't let him hit me! Oh, please don't let him hit me. I've been hit cruel to-day because I spoke to a man. Don't let him look at me like that! He's reg'lar wicked, that one. Don't let him look at me like that, neither! Oh, I feel as if I hadn't nothing on when he looks at me like that!'

The overstrained nerves in the frail body gave way, and the girl wept like a little child and began to scream.

Dick threw open the window, and Torpenhow flung the door back.

'There you are,' said Dick soothingly. 'My friend here can call for a policeman, and you can run through that door. Nobody is going to hurt you.'

The girl sobbed convulsively for a few minutes, and then tried to laugh.

'Nothing in the world to hurt you. Now listen to me for a minute. I'm what they call an artist by profession. You know what artists do?'

'They draw the things in red and black ink on the pop-shop labels.'

'I daresay. I haven't risen to pop-shop labels yet. Those are done by the Academicians. I want to draw your head.'

'What for?'

'Because it's pretty. That is why you will come to the room across the landing three times a week at eleven in the morning, and I'll give you three quid a week just for sitting still and being drawn. And there's a quid on account.'

'For nothing? Oh, my!' The girl turned the sovereign in her hand, and with more foolish tears: 'Ain't neither o' you two gentlemen afraid of my bilking you?'

'No. Only ugly girls do that. Try and remember this place. And, by the way, what's your name?'

'I'm Bessie,—Bessie—It's no use giving the rest. Bessie Broke,—Stone-broke if you like. What's your names? But there,—no one ever gives the real ones.'

Dick consulted Torpenhow with his eyes.

'My name's Heldar, and my friend's called Torpenhow; and you must be sure to come here. Where do you live?'

'South-the-water,—one room,—five and sixpence a week. Aren't you making fun of me about that three quid?'

'You'll see later on. And, Bessie, next time you come, remember, you needn't wear that paint. It's bad for the skin, and I have all the colours you'll be likely to need.'

Bessie withdrew, scrubbing her cheek with a ragged pocket-handkerchief. The two men looked at each other.

'You're a man,' said Torpenhow.

'I'm afraid I've been a fool. It isn't our business to run about the earth reforming Bessie Brokes. And a woman of any kind has no right on this landing.'

'Perhaps she won't come back.'

'She will if she thinks she can get food and warmth here. I know she will, worse luck. But remember, old man, she isn't a woman: she's my model; and be careful.'

'The idea! She's a dissolute little scarecrow,—a gutter-snippet and nothing more.'

'So you think. Wait till she has been fed a little and freed from fear. That fair type recovers itself very quickly. You won't know her in a week or two, when that abject fear has died out of her eyes. She'll be too happy and smiling for my purposes.'

'But surely you're taking her out of charity?—to please me?'

'I am not in the habit of playing with hot coals to please anybody. She has been sent from heaven, as I may have remarked before, to help me with my Melancolia.'

' 'Never heard a word about the lady before.'

'What's the use of having a friend if you must sling your notions at him in words? You ought to know what I'm thinking about. You've heard me grunt lately?'

'Even so; but grunts mean anything in your language from bad 'baccy to wicked dealers. And I don't think I've been much in your confidence for some time.'

'It was a high and soulful grunt. You ought to have understood that it meant the Melancolia.' Dick walked Torpenhow up and down the room, keeping silence. Then he smote him in the ribs. 'Now don't you see it? Bessie's abject futility, and the terror in her eyes, welded on to one or two details in the way of sorrow that have come under my experience lately. Likewise some orange and black,—two keys of each. But I can't explain on an empty stomach.'

'It sounds mad enough. You'd better stick to your soldiers, Dick, instead of maundering about heads and eyes and experiences.'

'Think so?' Dick began to dance on his heels, singing—

'They're as proud as a turkey when they hold the ready cash,
You ought to 'ear the way they laugh an' joke;
They are tricky an' they're funny when they've got the ready money,—
Ow! but see 'em when they're all stone-broke.'

Then he sat down to pour out his heart to Maisie in a four-sheet letter of counsel and encouragement, and registered an oath that he would get to work with an undivided heart as soon as Bessie should reappear.

The girl kept her appointment unpainted and unadorned, afraid and overbold by turns. When she found that she was merely expected to sit still, she grew calmer, and criticised the appointments of the studio with freedom and some point. She liked the warmth and the com-

fort and the release from fear of physical pain. Dick made two or three studies of her head in monochrome, but the actual notion of the Melancolia would not arrive.

'What a mess you keep your things in!' said Bessie, some days later, when she felt herself thoroughly at home. 'I s'pose your clothes are just as bad. Gentlemen never think what buttons and tape are made for.'

'I buy things to wear, and wear 'em till they go to pieces. I don't know what Torpenhow does.'

Bessie made diligent inquiry in the latter's room, and unearthed a bale of disreputable socks. 'Some of these I'll mend now,' she said, 'and some I'll take home. D' you know, I sit all day long at home doing nothing, just like a lady, and no more noticing them other girls in the house than if they was so many flies? I don't have any unnecessary words, but I put 'em down quick, I can tell you, when they talk to me. No; it's quite nice these days. I lock my door, and they can only call me names through the keyhole, and I sit inside, just like a lady, mending socks. Mr. Torpenhow wears his socks out both ends at once.'

'Three quid a week from me, and the delights of my society. No socks mended. Nothing from Torp except a nod on the landing now and again, and all his socks mended. Bessie is very much a woman,' thought Dick; and he looked at her between half-shut eyes. Food and rest had transformed the girl, as Dick knew they would.

'What are you looking at me like that for?' she said quickly. 'Don't. You look reg'lar bad when you look that way. You don't think much o' me, do you?'

'That depends on how you behave.'

Bessie behaved beautifully. Only it was difficult at

the end of a sitting to bid her go out into the gray streets. She very much preferred the studio and a big chair by the stove, with some socks in her lap as an excuse for delay. Then Torpenhow would come in, and Bessie would be moved to tell strange and wonderful stories of her past, and still stranger ones of her present improved circumstances. She would make them tea as though she had a right to make it; and once or twice on these occasions Dick caught Torpenhow's eyes fixed on the trim little figure, and because Bessie's flittings about the room made Dick ardently long for Maisie, he realised whither Torpenhow's thoughts were tending. And Bessie was exceedingly careful of the condition of Torpenhow's linen. She spoke very little to him, but sometimes they talked together on the landing.

'I was a great fool,' Dick said to himself. 'I know what red firelight looks like when a man's trampling through a strange town; and ours is a lonely, selfish sort of life at the best. I wonder Maisie doesn't feel that sometimes. But I can't order Bessie away. That's the worst of beginning things. One never knows where they stop.'

One evening, after a sitting prolonged to the last limit of the light, Dick was roused from a nap by a broken voice in Torpenhow's room. He jumped to his feet. 'Now what ought I to do? It looks foolish to go in.—Oh, bless you, Binkie!' The little terrier thrust Torpenhow's door open with his nose and came out to take possession of Dick's chair. The door swung wide unheeded, and Dick across the landing could see Bessie in the half-light making her little supplication to Torpenhow. She was kneeling by his side, and her hands were clasped across his knee.

'I know,—I know,' she said thickly. ''Tisn't right o' me to do this, but I can't help it; and you were so kind,—so kind; and you never took any notice o' me. And I've mended all your things so carefully,—I did. Oh, please, 'tisn't as if I was asking you to marry me. I wouldn't think of it. But cou—couldn't you take and live with me till Miss Right comes along? I'm only Miss Wrong, I know, but I'd work my hands to the bare bone for you. And I'm not ugly to look at. Say you will?'

Dick hardly recognised Torpenhow's voice in reply—'But look here. It's no use. I'm liable to be ordered off anywhere at a minute's notice if a war breaks out. At a minute's notice—dear.'

'What does that matter? Until you go, then. Until you go. 'Tisn't much I'm asking, and—you don't know how good I can cook.' She put an arm round his neck and was drawing his head down.

'Until—I—go, then.'

'Torp,' said Dick across the landing. He could hardly steady his voice. 'Come here a minute, old man. I'm in trouble.'—'Heaven send he'll listen to me!' There was something very like an oath from Bessie's lips. She was afraid of Dick, and disappeared down the staircase in panic, but it seemed an age before Torpenhow entered the studio. He went to the mantelpiece, buried his head on his arms, and groaned like a wounded bull.

'What the devil right have you to interfere?' he said, at last.

'Who's interfering with which? Your own sense told you long ago you couldn't be such a fool. It was a tough rack, St. Anthony, but you're all right now.'

'I oughtn't to have seen her moving about these rooms

as if they belonged to her. That's what upset me. It gives a lonely man a sort of hankering, doesn't it?' said Torpenhow piteously.

'Now you talk sense. It does. But, since you aren't in a condition to discuss the disadvantages of double housekeeping, do you know what you're going to do?'

'I don't. I wish I did.'

'You're going away for a season on a brilliant tour to regain tone. You're going to Brighton, or Scarborough, or Prawle Point, to see the ships go by. And you're going at once. Isn't it odd? I'll take care of Binkie, but out you go immediately. Never resist the devil. He holds the bank. Fly from him. Pack your things and go.'

'I believe you're right. Where shall I go?'

'And you call yourself a special correspondent! Pack first and inquire afterwards.'

An hour later Torpenhow was despatched into the night in a hansom. 'You'll probably think of some place to go to while you're moving,' said Dick. 'Go to Euston, to begin with, and—oh yes—get drunk to-night.'

He returned to the studio, and lighted more candles, for he found the room very dark.

'Oh, you Jezebel! you futile little Jezebel! Won't you hate me to-morrow?—Binkie, come here.'

Binkie turned over on his back on the hearth-rug, and Dick stirred him with a meditative foot.

'I said she was not immoral. I was wrong. She said she could cook. That showed premeditated sin. Oh, Binkie, if you are a man you will go to perdition; but if you are a woman, and say that you can cook, you will go to a much worse place.'

CHAPTER X

What's yon that follows at my side?—
The foe that ye must fight, my lord.—
That hirples swift as I can ride?—
The shadow of your might, my lord.—
Then wheel my horse against the foe!—
He's down and overpast, my lord.
Ye war against the sunset glow:
The darkness gathers fast, my lord.
'The Fight of Heriot's Ford.'

'THIS is a cheerful life,' said Dick, some days later. 'Torp's away; Bessie hates me; I can't get at the notion of the Melancolia; Maisie's letters are scrappy; and I believe I have indigestion. What gives a man pains across his head and spots before his eyes, Binkie? Shall us take some liver pills?'

Dick had just gone through a lively scene with Bessie. She had for the fiftieth time reproached him for sending Torpenhow away. She explained her enduring hatred for Dick, and made it clear to him that she only sat for the sake of his money. 'And Mr. Torpenhow's ten times a better man than you,' she concluded.

'He is. That's why he went away. I should have stayed and made love to you.'

The girl sat with her chin on her hand, scowling. 'To me! I'd like to catch you! If I wasn't afraid o' being

hung I'd kill you. That's what I'd do. D'you believe me?'

Dick smiled wearily. It is not pleasant to live in the company of a notion that will not work out, a fox-terrier that cannot talk, and a woman who talks too much. He would have answered, but at that moment there unrolled itself from one corner of the studio a veil, as it were, of the filmiest gauze. He rubbed his eyes, but the gray haze would not go.

'This is disgraceful indigestion. Binkie, we will go to a medicine-man. We can't have our eyes interfered with, for by these we get our bread; also mutton-chop bones for little dogs.'

The doctor was an affable local practitioner with white hair, and he said nothing till Dick began to describe the gray film in the studio.

'We all want a little patching and repairing from time to time,' he chirped. 'Like a ship, my dear sir,—exactly like a ship. Sometimes the hull is out of order, and we consult the surgeon; sometimes the rigging, and then I advise; sometimes the engines, and we go to the brain-specialist; sometimes the look-out on the bridge is tired, and then we see an oculist. I should recommend you to see an oculist. A little patching and repairing from time to time is all we want. An oculist, by all means.'

Dick sought an oculist,—the best in London. He was certain that the local practitioner did not know anything about his trade, and more certain that Maisie would laugh at him if he were forced to wear spectacles.

'I've neglected the warnings of my lord the stomach too long. Hence these spots before the eyes, Binkie. I can see as well as I ever could.'

As he entered the dark hall that led to the consulting-

room a man cannoned against him. Dick saw the face as it hurried out into the street.

'That's the writer-type. He has the same modelling of the forehead as Torp. He looks very sick. Probably heard something he didn't like.'

Even as he thought, a great fear came upon Dick, a fear that made him hold his breath as he walked into the oculist's waiting-room, with the heavy carved furniture, the dark-green paper, and the sober-hued prints on the wall. He recognised a reproduction of one of his own sketches.

Many people were waiting their turn before him. His eye was caught by a flaming red-and-gold Christmas-carol book. Little children came to that eye-doctor, and they needed large-type amusement.

'That's idolatrous bad Art,' he said, drawing the book towards himself. 'From the anatomy of the angels, it has been made in Germany.' He opened it mechanically, and there leaped to his eyes a verse printed in red ink—

'The next good joy that Mary had,
It was the joy of three,
To see her good Son Jesus Christ
Making the blind to see;
Making the blind to see, good Lord,
And happy may we be.
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
To all eternity!'

Dick read and re-read the verse till his turn came, and the doctor was bending above him seated in an arm-chair. The blaze of a gas-microscope in his eyes made him wince. The doctor's hand touched the scar of the

sword-cut on Dick's head, and Dick explained briefly how he had come by it. When the flame was removed, Dick saw the doctor's face, and the fear came upon him again. The doctor wrapped himself in a mist of words. Dick caught allusions to 'scar,' 'frontal bone,' 'optic nerve,' 'extreme caution,' and the 'avoidance of mental anxiety.'

'Verdict?' he said faintly. 'My business is painting, and I daren't waste time. What do you make of it?'

Again the whirl of words, but this time they conveyed a meaning.

'Can you give me anything to drink?'

Many sentences were pronounced in that darkened room, and the prisoners often needed cheering. Dick found a glass of liqueur-brandy in his hand.

'As far as I can gather,' he said, coughing above the spirit, 'you call it decay of the optic nerve, or something, and therefore hopeless. What is my time-limit, avoiding all strain and worry?'

'Perhaps one year.'

'My God! And if I don't take care of myself?'

'I really could not say. One cannot ascertain the exact amount of injury inflicted by the sword-cut. The scar is an old one, and—exposure to the strong light of the desert, did you say?—with excessive application to fine work? I really could not say.'

'I beg your pardon, but it has come without any warning. If you will let me, I'll sit here for a minute, and then I'll go. You have been very good in telling me the truth. . . . Without any warning . . . without any warning. Thanks.'

Dick went into the street, and was rapturously received by Binkie. 'We've got it very badly, little dog!

Just as badly as we can get it. We'll go to the Park to think it out.'

They headed for a certain tree that Dick knew well, and they sat down to think, because his legs were trembling under him and there was cold fear at the pit of his stomach.

'How could it have come without any warning? It's as sudden as being shot. It's the living death, Binkie. We're to be shut up in the dark in one year if we're careful, and we shan't see anybody, and we shall never have anything we want, not though we live to be a hundred.' Binkie wagged his tail joyously. 'Binkie, we must think. Let's see how it feels to be blind.' Dick shut his eyes, and flaming commas and Catherine-wheels floated inside the lids. Yet when he looked across the Park the scope of his vision was not contracted. He could see perfectly, until a procession of slow-wheeling fireworks defiled across his eyeballs.

'Little dorglums, we aren't at all well. Let's go home. If only Torp were back, now!'

But Torpenhow was in the South of England, inspecting dockyards in the company of the Nilghai. His letters were brief and full of mystery.

Dick had never asked anybody to help him in his joys or his sorrows. He argued, in the loneliness of the studio, henceforward to be decorated with a film of gray gauze in one corner, that, if his fate were blindness, all the Torpenhows in the world could not save him. 'I can't call him off his trip to sit down and sympathise with me. I must pull through the business alone,' he said. He was lying on the sofa eating his moustache and wondering what the darkness of the night would be like. Then came to his mind the memory of a quaint

scene in the Soudan. A soldier had been nearly hacked in two by a broad-bladed Arab spear. For one instant the man felt no pain. Looking down, he saw that his life-blood was going from him. The stupid bewilderment on his face was so intensely comic that both Dick and Torpenhow, still panting and unstrung from a fight for life, had roared with laughter, in which the man seemed as if he would join, but, as his lips parted in a sheepish grin, the agony of death came upon him, and he pitched grunting at their feet. Dick laughed again, remembering the horror. It seemed so exactly like his own case. 'But I have a little more time allowed me,' he said. He paced up and down the room, quietly at first, but afterwards with the hurried feet of fear. It was as though a black shadow stood at his elbow and urged him to go forward; and there were only weaving circles and floating pin-dots before his eyes.

'We must be calm, Binkie; we must be calm.' He talked aloud for the sake of distraction. 'This isn't nice at all. What shall we do? We must do something. Our time is short. I shouldn't have believed that this morning; but now things are different. Binkie, where was Moses when the light went out?'

Binkie smiled from ear to ear, as a well-bred terrier should, but made no suggestion.

' "Were there but world enough and time, This coyness, Binkie, were no crime. . . . But at my back I always hear—" ' He wiped his forehead, which was unpleasantly damp. 'What can I do? What can I do? I haven't any notions left, and I can't think connectedly, but I must do something, or I shall go off my head.'

The hurried walk recommenced, Dick stopping every now and again to drag forth long-neglected canvases and

old note-books; for he turned to his work by instinct as a thing that could not fail. 'You won't do, and you won't do,' he said, at each inspection. 'No more soldiers. I couldn't paint 'em. Sudden death comes home too nearly, and this is battle and murder both for me.'

The day was failing, and Dick thought for a moment that the twilight of the blind had come upon him unawares. 'Allah Almighty!' he cried despairingly, 'help me through the time of waiting, and I won't whine when my punishment comes. What can I do now, before the light goes?'

There was no answer. Dick waited till he could regain some sort of control over himself. His hands were shaking, and he prided himself on their steadiness; he could feel that his lips were quivering, and the sweat was running down his face. He was lashed by fear, driven forward by the desire to get to work at once and accomplish something, and maddened by the refusal of his brain to do more than repeat the news that he was about to go blind. 'It's a humiliating exhibition,' he thought, 'and I'm glad Torp isn't here to see. The doctor said I was to avoid mental worry. Come here and let me pet you, Binkie.'

The little dog yelped because Dick nearly squeezed the bark out of him. Then he heard the man speaking in the twilight and, doglike, understood that his trouble stood off from him—

'Allah is good, Binkie. Not quite so gentle as we could wish, but we'll discuss that later. I think I see my way to it now. All those studies of Bessie's head were nonsense, and they nearly brought your master into a scrape. I hold the notion now as clear as crystal, —"the Melancolia that transcends all wit." There

shall be Maisie in that head, because I shall never get Maisie; and Bess, of course, because she knows all about Melancolia, though she doesn't know she knows; and there shall be some drawing in it, and it shall all end up with a laugh. That's for myself. Shall she giggle or grin? No, she shall laugh right out of the canvas, and every man and woman that ever had a sorrow of their own shall—what is it the poem says?—

'Understand the speech and feel a stir
Of fellowship in all disastrous fight.

"In all disastrous fight"? That's better than painting the thing merely to pique Maisie. I can do it now because I have it inside me. Binkie, I'm going to hold you up by your tail. You're an omen. Come here.'

Binkie swung head downward for a moment without speaking.

' 'Rather like holding a guinea-pig; but you're a brave little dog, and you don't yelp when you're hung up. It is an omen.'

Binkie went to his own chair, and as often as he looked, saw Dick walking up and down, rubbing his hands and chuckling. That night Dick wrote a letter to Maisie full of the tenderest regard for her health, but saying very little about his own, and dreamed of the Melancolia to be born. Not till morning did he remember that something might happen to him in the future.

He fell to work, whistling softly, and was swallowed up in the clean, clear joy of creation, which does not come to man too often, lest he should consider himself the equal of his God, and so refuse to die at the appointed time. He forgot Maisie, Torpenhow, and Binkie at his feet, but remembered to stir Bessie, who needed very

little stirring, into a tremendous rage, that he might watch the smouldering lights in her eyes. He threw himself without reservation into his work, and did not think of the doom that was to overtake him, for he was possessed with his notion, and the things of this world had no power upon him.

'You're pleased to-day,' said Bessie.

Dick waved his mahl-stick in mystic circles and went to the sideboard for a drink. In the evening, when the exaltation of the day had died down, he went to the sideboard again, and after some visits became convinced that the eye-doctor was a liar, since he still could see everything very clearly. He was of opinion that he would even make a home for Maisie, and that whether she liked it or not she should be his wife. The mood passed next morning, but the sideboard and all upon it remained for his comfort. Again he set to work, and his eyes troubled him with spots and dashes and blurs till he had taken counsel with the sideboard, and the Melancolia both on the canvas and in his own mind appeared lovelier than ever. There was a delightful sense of irresponsibility upon him, such as they feel who walking among their fellow-men know that the death-sentence of disease is upon them, and, since fear is but waste of the little time left, are riotously happy. The days passed without event. Bessie arrived punctually always, and, though her voice seemed to Dick to come from a distance, her face was always very near, and the Melancolia began to flame on the canvas, in the likeness of a woman who had known all the sorrow in the world and was laughing at it. It was true that the corners of the studio draped themselves in gray film and retired into the darkness, that the spots in his eyes and the pains

across his head were very troublesome, and that Maisie's letters were hard to read and harder still to answer. He could not tell her of his trouble, and he could not laugh at her accounts of her own Melancolia which was always going to be finished. But the furious days of toil and the nights of wild dreams made amends for all, and the sideboard was his best friend on earth. Bessie was singularly dull. She used to shriek with rage when Dick stared at her between half-closed eyes. Now she sulked or watched him with disgust, saying very little.

Torpenhow had been absent for six weeks. An incoherent note heralded his return. 'News! great news!' he wrote. 'The Nilghai knows, and so does The Keneu. We're all back on Thursday. Get lunch and clean your accoutrements.'

Dick showed Bessie the letter, and she abused him for that he had ever sent Torpenhow away and ruined her life.

'Well,' said Dick brutally, 'you're better as you are, instead of making love to some drunken beast in the street.' He felt that he had rescued Torpenhow from great temptation.

'I don't know if that's any worse than sitting to a drunken beast in a studio. You haven't been sober for three weeks. You've been soaking the whole time; and yet you pretend you're better than me!'

'What d'you mean?' said Dick.

'Mean! You'll see when Mr. Torpenhow comes back.'

It was not long to wait. Torpenhow met Bessie on the staircase without a sign of feeling. He had news that was more to him than many Bessies, and The Keneu and the Nilghai were trampling behind him, calling for Dick.

'Drinking like a fish,' Bessie whispered. 'He's been at it for nearly a month.' She followed the men stealthily to hear judgment done.

They came into the studio, rejoicing, to be welcomed over-effusively by a drawn, lined, shrunken, haggard wreck,—unshaven, blue-white about the nostrils, stooping in the shoulders, and peering under his eyebrows nervously. The drink had been at work as steadily as Dick.

'Is this you?' said Torpenhow.

'All that's left of me. Sit down. Binkie's quite well, and I've been doing some good work.' He reeled where he stood.

'You've done some of the worst work you've ever done in your life. Man alive, you're—'

Torpenhow turned to his companions appealingly, and they left the room to find lunch elsewhere. Then he spoke; but, since the reproof of a friend is much too sacred and intimate a thing to be printed, and since Torpenhow used figures and metaphors which were unseemly, and contempt untranslatable, it will never be known what was actually said to Dick, who blinked and winked and picked at his hands. After a time the culprit began to feel the need of a little self-respect. He was quite sure that he had not in any way departed from virtue, and there were reasons, too, of which Torpenhow knew nothing. He would explain.

He rose, tried to straighten his shoulders, and spoke to the face he could hardly see.

'You are right,' he said. 'But I am right, too. After you went away I had some trouble with my eyes. So I went to an oculist, and he turned a gasogene—I mean a gas-engine—into my eye. That was very long ago. He

said, "Scar on the head,—sword-cut and optic nerve." Make a note of that. So I am going blind. I have some work to do before I go blind, and I suppose that I must do it. I cannot see much now, but I can see best when I am drunk. I did not know I was drunk till I was told, but I must go on with my work. If you want to see it, there it is.' He pointed to the all but finished Melancolia and looked for applause.

Torpenhow said nothing, and Dick began to whimper feebly, for joy at seeing Torpenhow again, for grief at misdeeds—if indeed they were misdeeds—that made Torpenhow remote and unsympathetic, and for childish vanity hurt, since Torpenhow had not given a word of praise to his wonderful picture.

Bessie looked through the keyhole after a long pause, and saw the two walking up and down as usual, Torpenhow's hand on Dick's shoulder. Hereat she said something so improper that it shocked even Binkie, who was dribbling patiently on the landing in the hope of seeing his master again.

CHAPTER XI

The lark will make her hymn to God,
  The partridge call her brood,
While I forget the heath I trod,
  The fields wherein I stood.
'Tis dule to know not night from morn,
  But deeper dule to know
I can but hear the hunter's horn
  That once I used to blow.

'The Only Son.'

IT was the third day after Torpenhow's return, and his heart was heavy.

'Do you mean to tell me that you can't see to work without whisky? It's generally the other way about.'

'Can a drunkard swear on his honour?' said Dick.

'Yes, if he has been as good a man as you.'

'Then I give you my word of honour,' said Dick, speaking hurriedly through parched lips. 'Old man, I can hardly see your face now. You've kept me sober for two days,—if I ever was drunk,—and I've done no work. Don't keep me back any more. I don't know when my eyes may give out. The spots and dots and the pains and things are crowding worse than ever. I swear I can see all right when I'm—when I'm moderately screwed, as you say. Give me three more sittings from Bessie and all the—stuff I want, and the picture

will be done. I can't kill myself in three days. It only means a touch of D. T. at the worst.'

'If I give you three days more will you promise me to stop work and—the other thing, whether the picture's finished or not?'

'I can't. You don't know what that picture means to me. But surely you could get the Nilghai to help you, and knock me down and tie me up. I shouldn't fight for the whisky, but I should for the work.'

'Go on, then. I give you three days; but you're nearly breaking my heart.'

Dick returned to his work, toiling as one possessed; and the yellow devil of whisky stood by him and chased away the spots in his eyes. The Melancolia was nearly finished, and was all or nearly all that he had hoped she would be. Dick jested with Bessie, who reminded him that he was 'a drunken beast'; but the reproof did not move him.

'You can't understand, Bess. We are in sight of land now, and soon we shall lie back and think about what we've done. I'll give you three months' pay when the picture's finished, and next time I have any more work in hand—but that doesn't matter. Won't three months' pay make you hate me less?'

'No, it won't! I hate you, and I'll go on hating you. Mr. Torpenhow won't speak to me any more. He's always looking at map-things and red-backed books.'

Bessie did not say that she had again laid siege to Torpenhow, or that he had at the end of her passionate pleading picked her up, given her a kiss, and put her outside the door with a recommendation not to be a little fool. He spent most of his time in the company of the Nilghai, and their talk was of war in the near future, the hiring of transports, and secret preparations among the

dockyards. He did not care to see Dick till the picture was finished.

'He's doing first-class work,' he said to the Nilghai, 'and it's quite out of his regular line. But, for the matter of that, so's his infernal drinking.'

'Never mind. Leave him alone. When he has come to his senses again we'll carry him off from this place and let him breathe clean air. Poor Dick! I don't envy you, Torp, when his eyes fail.'

'Yes, it will be a case of "God help the man who's chained to our Davie." The worst is that we don't know when it will happen; and I believe the uncertainty and the waiting have sent Dick to the whisky more than anything else.'

'How the Arab who cut his head open would grin if he knew!'

'He's at perfect liberty to grin if he can. He's dead. That's poor consolation now.'

In the afternoon of the third day Torpenhow heard Dick calling for him. 'All finished!' he shouted. 'I've done it! Come in! Isn't she a beauty? Isn't she a darling? I've been down to hell to get her; but isn't she worth it?'

Torpenhow looked at the head of a woman who laughed, —a full-lipped, hollow-eyed woman who laughed from out of the canvas as Dick had intended she should.

'Who taught you how to do it?' said Torpenhow. 'The touch and notion have nothing to do with your regular work. What a face it is! What eyes, and what insolence!' Unconsciously he threw back his head and laughed with her. 'She's seen the game played out,—I don't think she had a good time of it,—and now she doesn't care. Isn't that the idea?'

'Exactly.'

'Where did you get the mouth and chin from? They don't belong to Bess.'

'They're—some one else's. But isn't it good? Isn't it thundering good? Wasn't it worth the whisky? I did it. Alone I did it, and it's the best I can do.' He drew his breath sharply, and whispered, 'Just God! what could I not do ten years hence, if I can do this now!—By the way, what do you think of it, Bess?'

The girl was biting her lips. She loathed Torpenhow because he had taken no notice of her.

'I think it's just the horridest, beastliest thing I ever saw,' she answered, and turned away.

'More than you will be of that way of thinking, young woman.—Dick, there's a sort of murderous, viperine suggestion in the poise of the head that I don't understand,' said Torpenhow.

'That's trick-work,' said Dick, chuckling with delight of being completely understood. 'I couldn't resist one little bit of sheer swagger. It's a French trick, and you wouldn't understand; but it's got at by slewing round the head a trifle, and a tiny, tiny foreshortening of one side of the face from the angle of the chin to the top of the left ear. That, and deepening the shadow under the lobe of the ear. It was flagrant trick-work; but, having the notion fixed, I felt entitled to play with it.—Oh, you beauty!'

'Amen! She is a beauty. I can feel it.'

'So will every man who has any sorrow of his own,' said Dick, slapping his thigh. 'He shall see his trouble there, and, by the Lord Harry, just when he's feeling properly sorry for himself he shall throw back his head and laugh,—as she is laughing. I've put the life of my

heart and the light of my eyes into her, and I don't care what comes. . . . I'm tired,—awfully tired. I think I'll get to sleep. Take away the whisky, it has served its turn, and give Bessie thirty-six quid, and three over for luck. Cover the picture.'

He dropped asleep in the long chair, his face white and haggard almost before he had finished the sentence. Bessie tried to take Torpenhow's hand. 'Aren't you never going to speak to me any more?' she said; but Torpenhow was looking at Dick.

'What a stock of vanity the man has! I'll take him in hand to-morrow and make much of him. He deserves it.—Eh! what was that, Bess?'

'Nothing. I'll put things tidy here a little, and then I'll go. You couldn't give me that three months' pay now, could you? He said you were to.'

Torpenhow gave her a cheque and went to his own rooms. Bessie faithfully tidied up the studio, set the door ajar for flight, emptied half a bottle of turpentine on a duster, and began to scrub the face of the Melancolia viciously. The paint did not smudge quickly enough. She took a palette-knife and scraped, following each stroke with the wet duster. In five minutes the picture was a formless, scarred muddle of colours. She threw the paint-stained duster into the studio stove, stuck out her tongue at the sleeper, and whispered, 'Bilked!' as she turned to run down the staircase. She would never see Torpenhow any more, but she had at least done harm to the man who had come between her and her desire and who used to make fun of her. Cashing the cheque was the very cream of the jest to Bessie. Then the little privateer sailed across the Thames, to be swallowed up in the gray wilderness of South-the-water.

Dick slept till late into the evening, when Torpenhow dragged him off to bed. His eyes were as bright as his voice was hoarse. 'Let's have another look at the picture,' he said, insistently as a child.

'You—go—to—bed,' said Torpenhow. 'You aren't at all well, though you mayn't know it. You're as jumpy as a cat.'

'I reform to-morrow. Good-night.'

As he repassed through the studio, Torpenhow lifted the cloth above the picture, and almost betrayed himself by outcries: 'Wiped out!—scraped out and turped out! If Dick knows this to-night he'll go perfectly mad. He's on the verge of jumps as it is. That's Bess,—the little fiend! Only a woman could have done that!—with the ink not dry on the cheque, too! Dick will be raving mad to-morrow. It was all my fault for trying to help gutter-devils. Oh, my poor Dick, the Lord is hitting you very hard!'

Dick could not sleep that night, partly for pure joy, and partly because the well-known Catherine-wheels inside his eyes had given place to crackling volcanoes of many-coloured fire. 'Spout away,' he said aloud. 'I've done my work, and now you can do what you please.' He lay still, staring at the ceiling, the long-pent-up delirium of drink in his veins, his brain on fire with racing thoughts that would not stay to be considered, and his hands crisped and dry. He had just discovered that he was painting the face of the Melancolia on a revolving dome ribbed with millions of lights, and that all his wondrous thoughts stood embodied hundreds of feet below his tiny swinging plank, shouting together in his honour, when something cracked inside his temples like an overstrained bow-string, the glittering dome broke inward, and he was alone in the thick night.

'I'll go to sleep. The room's very dark. Let's light a lamp and see how the Melancolia looks. There ought to have been a moon.'

It was then that Torpenhow heard his name called by a voice that he did not know,—in the rattling accents of deadly fear.

'He's looked at the picture,' was his first thought, as he hurried into the bedroom and found Dick sitting up and beating the air with his hands.

'Torp! Torp! Where are you? For pity's sake, come to me!'

'What's the matter?'

Dick clutched at his shoulder. 'Matter! I've been lying here for hours in the dark, and you never heard me. Torp, old man, don't go away. I'm all in the dark. In the dark, I tell you!'

Torpenhow held the candle within a foot of Dick's eyes, but there was no light in those eyes. He lit the gas, and Dick heard the flame catch. The grip of his fingers on Torpenhow's shoulder made Torpenhow wince.

'Don't leave me. You wouldn't leave me alone now, would you? I can't see. D'you understand? It's black, —quite black,—and I feel as if I was falling through it all.'

'Steady does it.' Torpenhow put his arm round Dick and began to rock him gently to and fro.

'That's good. Now don't talk. If I keep very quiet for a while this darkness will lift. It seems just on the point of breaking. H'sh!' Dick knit his brows and stared desperately in front of him. The night air was chilling Torpenhow's toes.

'Can you stay like that a minute?' he said. 'I'll get my dressing-gown and some slippers.'

Dick clutched the bed-head with both hands and

waited for the darkness to clear away. 'What a time you've been!' he cried, when Torpenhow returned. 'It's as black as ever. What are you banging about in the doorway?'

'Long chair,—horse-blanket,—pillow. Going to sleep by you. Lie down now; you'll be better in the morning.'

'I shan't!' The voice rose to a wail. 'My God! I'm blind! I'm blind, and the darkness will never go away.' He made as if to leap from the bed, but Torpenhow's arms were round him, and Torpenhow's chin was on his shoulder, and his breath was squeezed out of him. He could only gasp, 'Blind!' and wriggle feebly.

'Steady, Dickie, steady!' said the deep voice in his ear, and the grip tightened. 'Bite on the bullet, old man, and don't let them think you're afraid.' The grip could draw no closer. Both men were breathing heavily. Dick threw his head from side to side and groaned.

'Let me go,' he panted. 'You're cracking my ribs. We —we mustn't let them think we're afraid, must we,—all the Powers of Darkness and that lot?'

'Lie down. It's all over now.'

'Yes,' said Dick obediently. 'But would you mind letting me hold your hand? I feel as if I wanted something to hold on to. One drops through the dark so.'

Torpenhow thrust out a large and hairy paw from the long chair. Dick clutched it tightly, and in half an hour had fallen asleep. Torpenhow withdrew his hand, and, stooping over Dick, kissed him lightly on the forehead, as men do sometimes kiss a wounded comrade in the hour of death, to ease his departure.

In the gray dawn Torpenhow heard Dick talking to himself. He was adrift on the shoreless tides of delirium, speaking very quickly—

'It's a pity,—a great pity; but it's helped, and it must be eaten, Master George. . . . Sufficient unto the day is the blindness thereof, and, further, putting aside all Melancolias and false humours, it is of obvious notoriety—such as mine was—that the queen can do no wrong. Torp doesn't know that. I'll tell him when we're a little farther into the desert. . . . What a bungle those boatmen are making of the steamer-ropes! They'll have that four-inch hawser chafed through in a minute. I told you so—there she goes! . . . White foam on green water, and the steamer slewing round. How good that looks! I'll sketch it. No, I can't. I'm afflicted with ophthalmia. That was one of the ten plagues of Egypt, and it extends up the Nile in the shape of cataract. Ha! that's a joke, Torp. Laugh, you graven image, and stand clear of the hawser. . . . It'll knock you into the water and make your dress all dirty, Maisie dear.'

'Oh!' said Torpenhow. 'This happened before. That night on the river.'

'She'll be sure to say it's my fault if you get muddy, and you're quite near enough to the breakwater. . . . Maisie, that's not fair. Ah! I knew you'd miss. Low and to the left, dear. But you've no conviction. Everything in the world except conviction. Don't be angry, darling. I'd cut my hand off if it would give you anything more than obstinacy. My right hand, if it would serve.'

'Now we mustn't listen. Here's an island shouting across seas of misunderstanding with a vengeance. But it's shouting truth, I fancy,' said Torpenhow.

The babble continued. It all bore upon Maisie. Sometimes Dick lectured at length on his craft, then he cursed

himself for his folly in being enslaved. He pleaded to Maisie for a kiss—only one kiss—before she went away, and called to her to come back from Vitry-sur-Marne, if she would; but through all his ravings he bade heaven and earth witness that the queen could do no wrong.

Torpenhow listened attentively, and learned every detail of Dick's life that had been hidden from him. For three days Dick raved through his past, and then slept a natural sleep. 'What a strain he has been running under, poor chap!' said Torpenhow. 'Dick, of all men, handing himself over like a dog. And I was lecturing him on arrogance! I ought to have known that it was no use to judge a man. But I did it. What a demon that girl must be! Dick's given her his life,—confound him!—and she's given him one kiss apparently.'

'Torp,' said Dick from the bed, 'go out for a walk. You've been here too long. I'll get up. Hi! This is annoying. I can't dress myself. Oh, it's too absurd!'

Torpenhow helped him into his clothes and led him to the big chair in the studio. He sat quietly waiting under strained nerves for the darkness to lift. It did not lift that day, nor the next. Dick adventured on a voyage round the walls. He hit his shins against the stove, and this suggested to him that it would be better to crawl on all-fours, one hand in front of him. Torpenhow found him on the floor.

'I'm trying to get the geography of my new possessions,' said he. 'D'you remember that nigger you gouged in the square? Pity you didn't keep the odd eye. It would have been useful. Any letters for me? Give me all the ones in fat gray envelopes with a sort of crown thing outside. They're of no importance.'

Torpenhow gave him a letter with a black M on the

envelope flap. Dick put it into his pocket. There was nothing in it that Torpenhow might not have read, but it belonged to himself and to Maisie, who would never belong to him.

'When she finds that I don't write she'll stop writing. It's better so. I couldn't be any use to her now,' Dick argued, and the tempter suggested that he should make known his condition. Every nerve in him revolted. 'I have fallen low enough already. I'm not going to beg for pity. Besides, it would be cruel to her.' He strove to put Maisie out of his thoughts; but the blind have many opportunities for thinking, and as the tides of his strength came back to him in the long employless days of dead darkness, Dick's soul was troubled to the core. Another letter, and another, came from Maisie. Then there was silence, and Dick sat by the window, the pulse of summer in the air, and pictured her being won by another man, stronger than himself. His imagination, the keener for the dark background it worked against, spared him no single detail that might send him raging up and down the studio, to stumble over the stove that seemed to be in four places at once. Worst of all, tobacco would not taste in the darkness. The arrogance of the man had disappeared, and in its place were settled despair that Torpenhow knew, and blind passion that Dick confided to his pillow at night. The intervals between the paroxysms were filled with intolerable waiting and the weight of intolerable darkness.

'Come out into the Park,' said Torpenhow. 'You haven't stirred out since the beginning of things.'

What's the use? There's no movement in the dark; and, besides,'—he paused irresolutely at the head of the stairs;—'something will run over me.'

'Not if I'm with you. Proceed gingerly.'

The roar of the streets filled Dick with nervous terror, and he clung to Torpenhow's arm. 'Fancy having to feel for a gutter with your foot!' he said petulantly, as he turned into the Park. 'Let's curse God and die.'

'Sentries are forbidden to pay unauthorised compliments. By Jove, there are the Guards!'

Dick's figure straightened. 'Let's get near 'em. Let's go in and look. Let's get on the grass and run. I can smell the trees.'

'Mind the low railing. That's all right!' Torpenhow kicked out a tuft of grass with his heel. 'Smell that,' he said. 'Isn't it good?' Dick snuffed luxuriously. 'Now pick up your feet and run.' They approached as near to the regiment as was possible. The clank of bayonets being unfixed made Dick's nostrils quiver.

'Let's get nearer. They're in column, aren't they?'

'Yes. How did you know?'

'Felt it. Oh, my men!—my beautiful men!' He edged forward as though he could see. 'I could draw those chaps once. Who'll draw 'em now?'

'They'll move off in a minute. Don't jump when the band begins.'

'Huh! I'm not a new charger. It's the silences that hurt. Nearer, Torp!—nearer! Oh, my God, what wouldn't I give to see 'em for a minute!—one half minute!'

He could hear the armed life almost within reach of him, could hear the slings tighten across the bandsman's chest as he heaved the big drum from the ground.

'Sticks crossed above his head,' whispered Torpenhow.

'I know. I know! Who should know if I don't? H'sh!'

The drumsticks fell with a boom, and the men swung forward to the crash of the band. Dick felt the wind of the massed movement in his face, heard the maddening tramp of feet and the friction of the pouches on the belts. The big drum pounded out the tune. It was a music-hall refrain that made a perfect quickstep—

'He must be a man of decent height,
He must be a man of weight,
He must come home on a Saturday night
In a thoroughly sober state;
He must know how to love me,
And he must know how to kiss;
And if he's enough to keep us both
I can't refuse him bliss.'

'What's the matter?' said Torpenhow, as he saw Dick's head fall when the last of the regiment had departed.

'Nothing. I feel a little bit out of the running,—that's all. Torp, take me back. Why did you bring me out?'

CHAPTER XII

There were three friends that buried the fourth,
The mould in his mouth and the dust in his eyes;
And they went south, and east, and north,—
The strong man fights, but the sick man dies.

There were three friends that spoke of the dead,—
The strong man fights, but the sick man dies.—
'And would he were here with us now,' they said,
'The sun in our face and the wind in our eyes.'
Ballad.

THE Nilghai was angry with Torpenhow. Dick had been sent to bed,—blind men are ever under the orders of those who can see,—and since he had returned from the Park had fluently sworn at Torpenhow because he was alive, and all the world because it was alive and could see, while he, Dick, was dead in the death of the blind, who, at the best, are only burdens upon their associates. Torpenhow had said something about a Mrs. Gummidge, and Dick had retired in a black fury to handle and rehandle three unopened letters from Maisie.

The Nilghai, fat, burly, and aggressive, was in Torpenhow's rooms. Behind him sat The Keneu, the Great War Eagle, and between them lay a large map embellished with black and white-headed pins.

'I was wrong about the Balkans,' said the Nilghai. 'But I'm not wrong about this business. The whole of our work in the Southern Soudan must be done over again. The public doesn't care, of course, but the Government does, and they are making their arrangements quietly. You know that as well as I do.'

'I remember how the people cursed us when our troops withdrew from Omdurman. It was bound to crop up sooner or later. But I can't go,' said Torpenhow. He pointed through the open door; it was a hot night. 'Can you blame me?'

The Keneu purred above his pipe like a large and very happy cat—

'Don't blame you in the least. It's uncommonly good of you, and all the rest of it, but every man—even you, Torp—must consider his work. I know it sounds brutal, but Dick's out of the race,—down,—gastados, expended, finished, done for. He has a little money of his own. He won't starve, and you can't pull out of your stride for his sake. Think of your own reputation.'

'Dick's was five times bigger than mine and yours put together.'

'That was because he signed his name to everything he did. It's all ended now. You must hold yourself in readiness to move out. You can command your own prices, and you do better work than any three of us.'

'Don't tell me how tempting it is. I'll stay here to look after Dick for a while. He's as cheerful as a bear with a sore head, but I think he likes to have me near him.'

The Nilghai said something uncomplimentary about soft-headed fools who throw away their careers for other fools. Torpenhow flushed angrily. The constant strain of attendance on Dick had worn his nerves thin.

'There remains a third fate,' said The Keneu thoughtfully. 'Consider this, and be not larger fools than is necessary. Dick is—or rather was—an able-bodied man of moderate attractions and a certain amount of audacity.'

'Oho!' said the Nilghai, who remembered an affair at Cairo. 'I begin to see.—Torp, I'm sorry.'

Torpenhow nodded forgiveness: 'You were more sorry when he cut you out, though.—Go on, Keneu.'

'I've often thought, when I've seen men die out in the desert, that if the news could be sent through the world, and the means of transport were quick enough, there would be one woman at least at each man's bedside.'

'There would be some mighty quaint revelations. Let us be grateful things are as they are,' said the Nilghai.

'Let us rather reverently consider whether Torp's three-cornered ministrations are exactly what Dick needs just now.—What do you think yourself, Torp?'

'I know they aren't. But what can I do?'

'Lay the matter before the Board. We are all Dick's friends here. You've been most in his life.'

'But I picked it up when he was off his head.'

'The greater chance of its being true. I thought we should arrive. Who is she?'

Then Torpenhow told a tale in plain words, as a special correspondent who knows how to make a verbal precis should tell it. The men listened without interruption.

'Is it possible that a man can come back across the years to his calf-love?' said Keneu. 'Is it possible?'

'I give the facts. He says nothing about it now, but he sits fumbling three letters from her when he thinks I'm not looking. What am I to do?'

'Speak to him,' said the Nilghai.

'Oh yes! Write to her,—I don't know her full name, remember,—and ask her to accept him out of pity. I believe you once told Dick you were sorry for him, Nilghai. You remember what happened, eh? Go into the bedroom and suggest full confession and an appeal to this Maisie girl, whoever she is. I honestly believe he'd try to kill you; and the blindness has made him rather muscular.'

'Torpenhow's course is perfectly clear,' said The Keneu. 'He will go to Vitry-sur-Marne, which is on the Bezieres-Landes Railway,—single track from Tourgas. The Prussians shelled it out in '70 because there was a poplar on the top of a hill eighteen hundred yards from the church spire. There's a squadron of cavalry quartered there,—or ought to be. Where this studio Torp spoke about may be I cannot tell. That is Torp's business. I have given him his route. He will dispassionately explain the situation to the girl, and she will come back to Dick,—the more especially because, to use Dick's words, "there is nothing but her damned obstinacy to keep them apart." '

'And they have four hundred and twenty pounds a year between 'em. Dick never lost his head for figures, even in his delirium. You haven't the shadow of an excuse for not going,' said the Nilghai.

Torpenhow looked very uncomfortable. 'But it's absurd and impossible. I can't drag her back by the hair.'

'Our business—the business for which we draw our money—is to do absurd and impossible things,—generally with no reason whatever except to amuse the public. Here we have a reason. The rest doesn't matter. I shall share these rooms with the Nilghai till Torpenhow

returns. There will be a batch of unbridled "specials" coming to town in a little while, and these will serve as their headquarters. Another reason for sending Torpenhow away. Thus Providence helps those who help others, and'—here The Keneu dropped his measured speech—'we can't have you tied by the leg to Dick when the trouble begins. It's your only chance of getting away; and Dick will be grateful.'

'He will,—worse luck! I can but go and try. I can't conceive a woman in her senses refusing Dick.'

'Talk that out with the girl. I have seen you wheedle an angry Mahdieh woman into giving you dates. This won't be a tithe as difficult. You had better not be here to-morrow afternoon, because the Nilghai and I will be in possession. It is an order. Obey.'

'Dick,' said Torpenhow next morning, 'can I do anything for you?'

'No! Leave me alone. How often must I remind you that I'm blind?'

'Nothing I could go for to fetch for to carry for to bring?'

'No. Take those infernal creaking boots of yours away.'

'Poor chap!' said Torpenhow to himself. 'I must have been sitting on his nerves lately. He wants a lighter step.' Then, aloud, 'Very well. Since you're so independent I'm going off for four or five days. Say goodbye at least. The housekeeper will look after you, and Keneu has my rooms.'

Dick's face fell. 'You won't be longer than a week at the outside? I know I'm touched in the temper, but I can't get on without you.'

'Can't you? You'll have to do without me in a little time, and you'll be glad I'm gone.'

Dick felt his way back to the big chair, and wondered what these things might mean. He did not wish to be tended by the housekeeper, and yet Torpenhow's constant tendernesses jarred on him. He did not exactly know what he wanted. The darkness would not lift, and Maisie's unopened letters felt worn and old from much handling. He could never read them for himself as long as life endured; but Maisie might have sent him some fresh ones to play with. The Nilghai entered with a gift,—a piece of red modelling-wax. He fancied that Dick might find interest in using his hands. Dick poked and patted the stuff for a few minutes, and, 'Is it like anything in the world?' he said drearily. 'Take it away. I may get the touch of the blind in fifty years. Do you know where Torpenhow has gone?'

The Nilghai knew nothing. 'We're staying in his rooms till he comes back. Can we do anything for you?'

'I'd like to be left alone, please. Don't think I'm ungrateful; but I'm best alone.'

The Nilghai chuckled, and Dick resumed his drowsy brooding and sullen rebellion against fate. He had long since ceased to think about the work he had done in the old days, and the desire to do more work had departed from him. He was exceedingly sorry for himself, and the completeness of his tender grief soothed him. But his soul and his body cried for Maisie,—Maisie who would understand. His mind pointed out that Maisie, having her own work to do, would not care. His experience had taught him that when money was exhausted women went away, and that when a man was knocked out of the race the others trampled on him. 'Then at the least,' said Dick, in reply, 'she could use me as I used Binat,—for some sort of a study. I wouldn't ask more

than to be near her again, even though I knew that another man was making love to her. Ugh! what a dog I am!'

A voice on the staircase began to sing joyfully—

'When we go—go—go—away from here,
Our creditors will weep and they will wail,
Our absence much regretting when they find that we've been getting
Out of England by next Tuesday's Indian mail.'

Following the trampling of feet, slamming of Torpenhow's door, and the sound of voices in strenuous debate, some one squeaked, 'And see, you good fellows, I have found a new water-bottle,—firs'-class patent—eh, how you say? Open himself inside out.'

Dick sprang to his feet. He knew the voice well. 'That's Cassavetti, come back from the Continent.' Now I know why Torp went away. There's a row somewhere, and—I'm out of it!'

The Nilghai commanded silence in vain. 'That's for my sake,' Dick said bitterly. 'The birds are getting ready to fly, and they wouldn't tell me. I can hear Morten-Sutherland and Mackaye. Half the War Correspondents in London are there;—and I'm out of it.'

He stumbled across the landing and plunged into Torpenhow's room. He could feel that it was full of men. 'Where's the trouble?' said he. 'In the Balkans at last? Why didn't some one tell me?'

'We thought you wouldn't be interested,' said the Nilghai shamefacedly. 'It's in the Soudan, as usual.'

'You lucky dogs! Let me sit here while you talk. I shan't be a skeleton at the feast.—Cassavetti, where are you? Your English is as bad as ever.'

Dick was led into a chair. He heard the rustle of the maps, and the talk swept forward, carrying him with it. Everybody spoke at once, discussing press censorships, railway-routes, transport, water-supply, the capacities of generals,—these in language that would have horrified a trusting public,—ranting, asserting, denouncing, and laughing at the top of their voices. There was the glorious certainty of war in the Soudan at any moment. The Nilghai said so, and it was well to be in readiness. The Keneu had telegraphed to Cairo for horses; Cassavetti had stolen a perfectly inaccurate list of troops that would be ordered forward, and was reading it out amid profane interruptions, and The Keneu introduced to Dick some man unknown who would be employed as war artist by the Central Southern Syndicate. 'It's his first outing,' said The Keneu. 'Give him some tips—about riding camels.'

'Oh, those camels?' groaned Cassavetti. 'I shall learn to ride him again, and now I am so much all soft! Listen, you good fellows. I know your military arrangement very well. There will go the Royal Argalshire Sutherlanders. So it was read to me upon best authority.'

A roar of laughter interrupted him.

'Sit down,' said the Nilghai. 'The lists aren't even made out in the War Office.'

'Will there be any force at Suakin?' said a voice.

Then the outcries redoubled, and grew mixed, thus: 'How many Egyptian troops will they use?—God help the Fellaheen!—There's a railway in Plumstead marshes doing duty as a fives-court.—We shall have the Suakin-Berber line built at last.—Canadian voyageurs are too careful. Give me a half-drunk Krooman in a whale-

boat.—Who commands the Desert column?—No, they never blew up the big rock at the Ghizeh bend. We shall have to be hauled up, as usual.—Somebody tell me if there's an Indian contingent, or I'll break everybody's head.—Don't tear the map in two.—It's a war of occupation, I tell you, to connect with the African Companies in the South.—There's guinea-worm in most of the wells on that route.' Then the Nilghai, despairing of peace, bellowed like a fog-horn and beat upon the table with both hands.

'But what becomes of Torpenhow?' said Dick, in the silence that followed.

'Torp's in abeyance just now. He's off lovemaking somewhere, I suppose,' said the Nilghai.

'He said he was going to stay at home,' said The Keneu.

'Is he?' said Dick with an oath. 'He won't. I'm not much good now, but if you and the Nilghai hold him down I'll engage to trample on him till he sees reason. He stay behind, indeed! He's the best of you all. There'll be some tough work by Omdurman. We shall come there to stay, this time. But I forgot. I wish I were going with you.'

'So do we all, Dickie,' said The Keneu.

'And I most of all,' said the new artist of the Central Southern Syndicate. 'Could you tell me—'

'I'll give you one piece of advice,' Dick answered, moving towards the door. 'If you happen to be cut over the head in a scrimmage, don't guard. Tell the man to go on cutting. You'll find it cheapest in the end. Thanks for letting me look in.'

'There's grit in Dick,' said the Nilghai, an hour later, when the room was emptied of all save The Keneu.

'It was the sacred call of the war-trumpet. Did you notice how he answered to it? Poor fellow! Let's look at him,' said The Keneu.

The excitement of the talk had died away. Dick was sitting by the studio table with his head on his arms, when the men came in. He did not change his position.

'It hurts,' he moaned. 'God forgive me, but it hurts cruelly; and yet, y'know, the world has a knack of spinning round all by itself. Shall I see Torp before he goes?'

'Oh yes. You'll see him,' said the Nilghai.

CHAPTER XIII

The sun went down an hour ago,
I wonder if I face towards home,
If I lost my way in the light of day
How shall I find it now night is come?
Old Song.

'MAISIE, come to bed.'

'It's so hot I can't sleep. Don't worry.'

Maisie put her elbows on the window-sill and looked at the moonlight on the straight, poplar-flanked road. Summer had come upon Vitry-sur-Marne and parched it to the bone. The grass was dry-burnt in the meadows, the clay by the bank of the river was caked to brick, the roadside flowers were long since dead, and the roses in the garden hung withered on their stalks. The heat in the little low bedroom under the eaves was almost intolerable. The very moonlight on the wall of Kami's studio across the road seemed to make the night hotter, and the shadow of the big bell-handle by the closed gate cast a bar of inky black that caught Maisie's eye and annoyed her.

'Horrid thing! It should be all white,' she murmured. 'And the gate isn't in the middle of the wall, either. I never noticed that before.'

Maisie was hard to please at that hour. First, the heat of the past few weeks had worn her down; secondly,

her work, and particularly the study of a female head, intended to represent the Melancolia and not finished in time for the Salon, was unsatisfactory; thirdly, Kami had said as much two days before; fourthly,—but so completely fourthly that it was hardly worth thinking about,—Dick, her property, had not written to her for more than six weeks. She was angry with the heat, with Kami, and with her work, but she was exceedingly angry with Dick.

She had written to him three times,—each time proposing a fresh treatment of her Melancolia. Dick had taken no notice of these communications. She had resolved to write no more. When she returned to England in the autumn—for her pride's sake she could not return earlier—she would speak to him. She missed the Sunday afternoon conferences more than she cared to admit. All that Kami said was, 'Continuez, mademoiselle, continuez toujours,' and he had been repeating his wearisome counsel through the hot summer, exactly like a cicala,—an old gray cicala in a black alpaca coat, white trousers, and a huge felt hat. But Dick had tramped masterfully up and down her little studio north of the cool green London park, and had said things ten times worse than 'Continuez,' before he snatched the brush out of her hand and showed her where her error lay. His last letter, Maisie remembered, contained some trivial advice about not sketching in the sun or drinking water at wayside farmhouses; and he had said that not once, but three times,—as if he did not know that Maisie could take care of herself!

But what was he doing, that he could not trouble to write? A murmur of voices in the road made her lean from the window. A cavalryman of the little garrison

in the town was talking to Kami's cook. The moonlight glittered on the scabbard of his sabre, which he was holding in his hand lest it should clank inopportunely. The cook's cap cast deep shadows on her face, which was close to the conscript's. He slid his arm round her waist and there followed the sound of a kiss.

'Faugh!' said Maisie, stepping back.

'What's that!' said the red-haired girl, who was tossing uneasily outside her bed.

'Only a conscript kissing the cook,' said Maisie. 'They've gone away now,' She leaned out of the window again, and put a shawl over her nightgown to guard against chills. There was a very small night-breeze abroad, and a sun-baked rose below nodded its head as one who knew unutterable secrets. Was it possible that Dick should turn his thoughts from her work and his own and descend to the degradation of Suzanne and the conscript? He could not! The rose nodded its head and one leaf therewith. It looked like a naughty little devil scratching its ear. Dick could not, 'because,' thought Maisie, 'he is mine,—mine,—mine. He said he was. I'm sure I don't care what he does. It will only spoil his work if he does; and it will spoil mine too.

The rose continued to nod in the futile way peculiar to flowers. There was no earthly reason why Dick should not disport himself as he chose, except that he was called by Providence, which was Maisie, to assist Maisie in her work. And her work was the preparation of pictures that went sometimes to English provincial exhibitions, as the notices in the scrap-book proved, and that were invariably rejected by the Salon when Kami was plagued into allowing her to send them up. Her work in the future, it seemed, would be the preparation of pictures

on exactly similar lines which would be rejected in exactly the same way—

[The red-haired girl threshed distressfully across the sheets. 'It's too hot to sleep,' she moaned; and the interruption jarred.]

Exactly the same way. Then she would divide her years between the little studio in England and Kami's big studio at Vitry-sur-Marne. No, she would go to another master, who should force her into the success that was her right, if patient toil and desperate endeavour gave one a right to anything. Dick had told her that he had worked ten years to understand his craft. She had worked ten years, and ten years were nothing. Dick had said that ten years were nothing,—but that was in regard to herself only. He had said—this very man who could not find time to write—that he would wait ten years for her, and that she was bound to come back to him sooner or later. He had said this in the absurd letter about sunstroke and diphtheria; and then he had stopped writing. He was wandering up and down moonlit streets, kissing cooks. She would like to lecture him now,—not in her nightgown, of course, but properly dressed, severely and from a height. Yet if he was kissing other girls he certainly would not care whether she lectured him or not. He would laugh at her. Very good. She would go back to her studio and prepare pictures that went, etc., etc. The mill-wheel of thought swung round slowly, that no section of it might be slurred over, and the red-haired girl tossed and turned behind her.

Maisie put her chin in her hands and decided that there could be no doubt whatever of the villainy of Dick. To justify herself, she began, unwomanly, to weigh the evidence. There was a boy, and he had said he loved

her. And he kissed her,—kissed her on the cheek,—by a yellow sea-poppy that nodded its head exactly like the maddening dry rose in the garden. Then there was an interval, and men had told her that they loved her—just when she was busiest with her work. Then the boy came back, and at their very second meeting had told her that he loved her. Then he had—But there was no end to the things he had done. He had given her his time and his powers. He had spoken to her of Art, housekeeping, technique, teacups, the abuse of pickles as a stimulant,—that was rude,—sable-hair brushes,—he had given her the best in her stock,—she used them daily; he had given her advice that she profited by, and now and again—a look. Such a look! The look of a beaten hound waiting for the word to crawl to his mistress's feet. In return she had given him nothing whatever, except—here she brushed her mouth against the open-work sleeve of her nightgown—the privilege of kissing her once. And on the mouth, too. Disgraceful! Was that not enough, and more than enough? and if it was not, had he not cancelled the debt by not writing and—probably kissing other girls?

'Maisie, you'll catch a chill. Do go and lie down,' said the wearied voice of her companion. 'I can't sleep a wink with you at the window.'

Maisie shrugged her shoulders and did not answer. She was reflecting on the meannesses of Dick, and on other meannesses with which he had nothing to do. The remorseless moonlight would not let her sleep. It lay on the skylight of the studio across the road in cold silver; she stared at it intently, and her thoughts began to slide one into the other. The shadow of the big bell-handle in the wall grew short, lengthened again, and faded out

as the moon went down behind the pasture and a hare came limping home across the road. Then the dawn-wind washed through the upland grasses, and brought coolness with it, and the cattle lowed by the drought-shrunk river. Maisie's head fell forward on the window-sill, and the tangle of black hair covered her arms.

'Maisie, wake up. You'll catch a chill.'

'Yes, dear; yes, dear.' She staggered to her bed like a wearied child, and as she buried her face in the pillows she muttered, 'I think—I think. . . . But he ought to have written.'

Day brought the routine of the studio, the smell of paint and turpentine, and the monotonous wisdom of Kami, who was a leaden artist, but a golden teacher if the pupil were only in sympathy with him. Maisie was not in sympathy that day, and she waited impatiently for the end of the work. She knew when it was coming; for Kami would gather his black alpaca coat into a bunch behind him, and, with faded blue eyes that saw neither pupils nor canvas, look back into the past to recall the history of one Binat. 'You have all done not so badly,' he would say. 'But you shall remember that it is not enough to have the method and the art, and the power, nor even that which is touch, but you shall have also the conviction that nails the work to the wall. Of the so many I have taught,'—here the students would begin to unfix drawing-pins or get their tubes together,—'the very so many that I have taught, the best was Binat. All that comes of the study and the work and the knowledge was to him even when he came. After he left me he should have done all that could be done with the colour, the form, and the knowledge. Only, he had not the conviction. So to-day I hear no more of Binat,—

the best of my pupils,—and that is long ago. So to-day, too, you will be glad to hear no more of me. Continuez, mesdemoiselles, and, above all, with conviction.'

He went into the garden to smoke and mourn over the lost Binat as the pupils dispersed to their several cottages or loitered in the studio to make plans for the cool of the afternoon.

Maisie looked at her very unhappy Melancolia, restrained a desire to grimace before it, and was hurrying across the road to write a letter to Dick, when she was aware of a large man on a white troop-horse. How Torpenhow had managed in the course of twenty hours to find his way to the hearts of the cavalry officers in quarters at Vitry-sur-Marne to discuss with them the certainty of a glorious revenge for France, to reduce the colonel to tears of pure affability, and to borrow the best horse in the squadron for the journey to Kami's studio, is a mystery that only special correspondents can unravel.

'I beg your pardon,' said he. 'It seems an absurd question to ask, but the fact is that I don't know her by any other name: Is there any young lady here that is called Maisie'?'

'I am Maisie,' was the answer from the depths of a great sun-hat.

'I ought to introduce myself,' he said, as the horse capered in the blinding white dust. 'My name is Torpenhow. Dick Heldar is my best friend, and—and—the fact is that he has gone blind.'

'Blind?' said Maisie stupidly. 'He can't be blind.'

'He has been stone-blind for nearly two months.'

Maisie lifted up her face, and it was pearly white. 'No! No! Not blind! I won't have him blind!'

'Would you care to see for yourself?' said Torpenhow.

'Now,—at once?'

'Oh no! The Paris train doesn't go through this place till eight to-night. There will be ample time.'

'Did Mr. Heldar send you to me?'

'Certainly not. Dick wouldn't do that sort of thing. He's sitting in his studio, turning over some letters that he can't read because he's blind.'

There was a sound of choking from the sun-hat. Maisie bowed her head and went into the cottage, where the red-haired girl was on a sofa, complaining of a headache.

'Dick's blind!' said Maisie, taking her breath quickly as she steadied herself against a chair-back. 'My Dick's blind!'

'What?' The girl was on the sofa no longer.

'A man has come from England to tell me. He hasn't written to me for six weeks.'

'Are you going to him?'

'I must think.'

'Think! I should go back to London and see him, and I should kiss his eyes, and kiss them and kiss them until they got well again! If you don't go I shall. Oh, what am I talking about? You wicked little idiot! Go to him at once. Go!'

Torpenhow's neck was blistering, but he preserved a smile of infinite patience as Maisie appeared bareheaded in the sunshine.

'I am coming,' said she, her eyes on the ground.

'You will be at Vitry Station, then, at seven this evening.' This was an order delivered by one who was used to being obeyed. Maisie said nothing, but she felt grateful that there was no chance of disputing with this big man who took everything for granted and managed

a squealing horse with one hand. She returned to the red-haired girl, who was weeping bitterly, and between tears, kisses,—very few of those,—menthol, packing, and an interview with Kami, the sultry afternoon wore away. Thought might come afterwards. Her present duty was to go to Dick,—Dick who owned the wondrous friend and sat in the dark playing with her unopened letters.

'But what will you do?' she said to her companion.

'I? Oh, I shall stay here and—finish your Melancolia,' she said, smiling pitifully. 'Write to me afterwards.'

That night there ran a legend through Vitry-sur-Marne of a mad Englishman, doubtless suffering from sunstroke, who had drunk all the officers of the garrison under the table, had borrowed a horse from the lines, and had then and there eloped, after the English custom, with one of those more than mad English girls who drew pictures down there under the care of that good Monsieur Kami.

'They are very droll,' said Suzanne to the conscript in the moonlight by the studio wall. 'She walked always with those big eyes that saw nothing, and yet she kisses me on both cheeks as though she were my sister, and gives me—see—ten francs!'

The conscript levied a contribution on both gifts; for he prided himself on being a good soldier.

Torpenhow spoke very little to Maisie during the journey to Calais; but he was careful to attend to all her wants, to get her a compartment entirely to herself, and to leave her alone. He was amazed at the ease with which the matter had been accomplished.

'The safest thing would be to let her think things out. By Dick's showing,—when he was off his head,—she must have ordered him about very thoroughly. Wonder how she likes being under orders.'

Maisie never told. She sat in the empty compartment often with her eyes shut, that she might realise the sensation of blindness. It was an order that she should return to London swiftly, and she found herself at last almost beginning to enjoy the situation. This was better than looking after luggage and a red-haired friend who never took any interest in her surroundings. But there appeared to be a feeling in the air that she, Maisie, —of all people,—was in disgrace. Therefore she justified her conduct to herself with great success, till Torpenhow came up to her on the steamer, and without preface began to tell the story of Dick's blindness, suppressing a few details, but dwelling at length on the miseries of delirium. He stopped before he reached the end, as though he had lost interest in the subject, and went forward to smoke. Maisie was furious with him and with herself.

She was hurried on from Dover to London almost before she could ask for breakfast, and—she was past any feeling of indignation now—was bidden curtly to wait in a hall at the foot of some lead-covered stairs while Torpenhow went up to make inquiries. Again the knowledge that she was being treated like a naughty little girl made her pale cheeks flame. It was all Dick's fault for being so stupid as to go blind.

Torpenhow led her up to a shut door, which he opened very softly. Dick was sitting by the window, with his chin on his chest. There were three envelopes in his hand, and he turned them over and over. The big man who gave orders was no longer by her side, and the studio door snapped behind her.

Dick thrust the letters into his pocket as he heard the sound. 'Hullo, Torp! Is that you? I've been so lonely.'

His voice had taken the peculiar flatness of the blind. Maisie pressed herself up into a corner of the room. Her heart was beating furiously, and she put one hand on her breast to keep it quiet. Dick was staring directly at her, and she realised for the first time that he was blind. Shutting her eyes in a railway-carriage to open them when she pleased was child's play. This man was blind though his eyes were wide open.

'Torp, is that you? They said you were coming.' Dick looked puzzled and a little irritated at the silence.

'No: it's only me,' was the answer, in a strained little whisper. Maisie could hardly move her lips.

'H'm!' said Dick composedly, without moving. 'This is a new phenomenon. Darkness I'm getting used to; but I object to hearing voices.'

Was he mad, then, as well as blind, that he talked to himself? Maisie's heart beat more wildly, and she breathed in gasps. Dick rose and began to feel his way across the room, touching each table and chair as he passed. Once he caught his foot on a rug, and swore, dropping on his knees to feel what the obstruction might be. Maisie remembered him walking in the Park as though all the earth belonged to him, tramping up and down her studio two months ago, and flying up the gangway of the Channel steamer. The beating of her heart was making her sick, and Dick was coming nearer, guided by the sound of her breathing. She put out a hand mechanically to ward him off or to draw him to herself, she did not know which. It touched his chest, and he stepped back as though he had been shot.

'It's Maisie!' said he, with a dry sob. 'What are you doing here?'

'I came—I came—to see you, please.'

Dick's lips closed firmly.

'Won't you sit down, then? You see, I've had some bother with my eyes, and—'

'I know. I know. Why didn't you tell me?'

'I couldn't write.'

'You might have told Mr. Torpenhow.'

'What has he to do with my affairs?'

'He—he brought me from Vitry-sur-Marne. He thought I ought to see you.'

'Why, what has happened? Can I do anything for you? No, I can't. I forgot.'

'Oh, Dick, I'm so sorry! I've come to tell you, and —Let me take you back to your chair.'

'Don't! I'm not a child. You only do that out of pity. I never meant to tell you anything about it. I'm no good now. I'm down and done for. Let me alone!'

He groped back to his chair, his chest labouring as he sat down.

Maisie watched him, and the fear went out of her heart, to be followed by a very bitter shame. He had spoken a truth that had been hidden from the girl through every step of the impetuous flight to London; for he was, indeed, down and done for—masterful no longer, but rather a little abject; neither an artist stronger than she, nor a man to be looked up to—only some blind one that sat in a chair and seemed on the point of crying. She was immensely and unfeignedly sorry for him—more sorry than she had ever been for any one in her life, but not sorry enough to deny his words. So she stood still and felt ashamed and a little hurt, because she had honestly intended that her journey should end triumphantly; and now she was only filled with pity most startlingly distinct from love.

'Well?' said Dick, his face steadily turned away. 'I never meant to worry you any more. What's the matter?'

He was conscious that Maisie was catching her breath, but was as unprepared as herself for the torrent of emotion that followed. People who cannot cry easily weep unrestrainedly when the fountains of the great deep are broken up. She had dropped into a chair and was sobbing with her face hidden in her hands.

'I can't—I can't!' she cried desperately. 'Indeed, I can't. It isn't my fault. I'm so sorry. Oh, Dickie, I'm so sorry.'

Dick's shoulders straightened again, for the words lashed like a whip. Still the sobbing continued. It is not good to realise that you have failed in the hour of trial or flinched before the mere possibility of making sacrifices.

'I do despise myself—indeed I do. But I can't. Oh, Dickie, you wouldn't ask me—would you?' wailed Maisie.

She looked up for a minute, and by chance it happened that Dick's eyes fell on hers. The unshaven face was very white and set, and the lips were trying to force themselves into a smile. But it was the worn-out eyes that Maisie feared. Her Dick had gone blind and left in his place some one that she could hardly recognise till he spoke.

'Who is asking you to do anything, Maisie? I told you how it would be. What's the use of worrying? For pity's sake don't cry like that; it isn't worth it.'

'You don't know how I hate myself. Oh, Dick, help me—help me!' The passion of tears had grown beyond her control and was beginning to alarm the man. He

stumbled forward and put his arm round her, and her head fell on his shoulder.

'Hush, dear, hush! Don't cry. You're quite right, and you've nothing to reproach yourself with—you never had. You're only a little upset by the journey, and I don't suppose you've had any breakfast. What a brute Torp was to bring you over.'

'I wanted to come. I did indeed,' she protested.

'Very well. And now you've come and seen, and I'm —immensely grateful. When you're better you shall go away and get something to eat. What sort of a passage did you have coming over?'

Maisie was crying more subduedly, for the first time in her life glad that she had something to lean against. Dick patted her on the shoulder tenderly but clumsily, for he was not quite sure where her shoulder might be.

She drew herself out of his arms at last and waited, trembling and most unhappy. He had felt his way to the window to put the width of the room between them, and to quiet a little the tumult in his heart.

'Are you better now?' he said.

'Yes, but—don't you hate me?'

'I hate you? My God! I?'

'Isn't—isn't there anything I could do for you, then? I'll stay here in England to do it, if you like. Perhaps I could come and see you sometimes.'

'I think not, dear. It would be kindest not to see me any more, please. I don't want to seem rude, but—don't you think—perhaps you had almost better go now.'

He was conscious that he could not bear himself as a man if the strain continued much longer.

'I don't deserve anything else. I'll go, Dick. Oh, I'm so miserable.'

'Nonsense. You've nothing to worry about; I'd tell you if you had. Wait a moment, dear. I've got something to give you first. I meant it for you ever since this little trouble began. It's my Melancolia; she was a beauty when I last saw her. You can keep her for me, and if ever you're poor you can sell her. She's worth a few hundreds at any state of the market.' He groped among his canvases. 'She's framed in black. Is this a black frame that I have my hand on? There she is. What do you think of her?'

He turned a scarred, formless muddle of paint towards Maisie, and the eyes strained as though they would catch her wonder and surprise. One thing and one thing only could she do for him.

'Well?'

The voice was fuller and more rounded, because the man knew he was speaking of his best work. Maisie looked at the blur, and a lunatic desire to laugh caught her by the throat. But for Dick's sake—whatever this mad blankness might mean—she must make no sign. Her voice choked with hard-held tears as she answered, still gazing on the wreck—

'Oh, Dick, it is good!'

He heard the little hysterical gulp and took it for tribute. 'Won't you have it, then? I'll send it over to your house if you will.'

'I? Oh, yes—thank you. Ha! ha!' If she did not fly at once the laughter that was worse than tears would kill her. She turned and ran, choking and blinded, down the staircases that were empty of life, to take refuge in a cab and go to her house across the Park. There she sat down in the almost dismantled drawing-room and thought of Dick in his blindness, useless till the end

of life, and of herself in her own eyes. Behind the sorrow, the shame, and the humiliation, lay fear of the cold wrath of the red-haired girl when Maisie should return. Maisie had never feared her companion before. Not until she found herself saying, 'Well, he never asked me,' did she realise her scorn of herself.

And that is the end of Maisie.

For Dick was reserved more searching torment. He could not realise at first that Maisie, whom he had ordered to go, had left him without a word of farewell. He was savagely angry against Torpenhow, who had brought upon him this humiliation and troubled his miserable peace. Then his dark hour came, and he was alone with himself and his desires to get what help he could from the darkness. The queen could do no wrong, but in following the right, so far as it served her work, she had wounded her one subject more than his own brain would let him know.

'It's all I had and I've lost it,' he said, as soon as the misery permitted clear thinking. 'And Torp will think that he has been so infernally clever that I shan't have the heart to tell him. I must think this out quietly.'

'Hullo!' said Torpenhow, entering the studio after Dick had enjoyed two hours of thought. 'I'm back. Are you feeling any better?'

'Torp, I don't know what to say. Come here.' Dick coughed huskily, wondering, indeed, what he should say and how to say it temperately.

'What's the need for saying anything? Get up and tramp.' Torpenhow was perfectly satisfied.

They walked up and down as of custom, Torpenhow's hand on Dick's shoulder, and Dick buried in his own thoughts.

'How in the world did you find it all out?' said Dick at last.

'You shouldn't go off your head if you want to keep secrets, Dickie. It was absolutely impertinent on my part; but if you'd seen me rocketing about on a half-trained French troop-horse under a blazing sun you'd have laughed. There will be a charivari in my rooms to-night. Seven other devils—'

'I know—the row in the Southern Soudan. I surprised their councils the other day, and it made me unhappy. Have you fixed your flint to go? Who d'you work for?'

' 'Haven't signed any contracts yet. I wanted to see how your business would turn out.'

'Would you have stayed with me, then, if—things had gone wrong?' He put his question cautiously.

'Don't ask me too much. I'm only a man.'

'You've tried to be an angel very successfully.'

'Oh ye—es! . . . Well, do you attend the function to-night? We shall be half screwed before the morning. All the men believe the war's a certainty.'

'I don't think I will, old man, if it's all the same to you. I'll stay quiet here.'

'And meditate? I don't blame you. You deserve a good time if ever a man did.'

That night there was tumult on the stairs. The correspondents poured in from theatre, dinner and music-hall to Torpenhow's room that they might discuss their plan of campaign in the event of military operations being a certainty. Torpenhow, The Keneu, and the Nilghai had bidden all the men they had worked with to the orgy; and Mr. Beeton, the housekeeper, declared that never before in his checkered experience had he seen quite

such a fancy lot of gentlemen. They waked the chambers with shoutings and song; and the elder men were quite as bad as the younger. For the chances of war were in front of them, and all knew what those meant.

Sitting in his own room a little perplexed by the noise across the landing, Dick suddenly began to laugh to himself.

'When one comes to think of it the situation is intensely comic. Maisie's quite right—poor little thing. I didn't know she could cry like that before; but now I know what Torp thinks, I'm sure he'd be quite fool enough to stay at home and try to console me—if he knew. Besides, it isn't nice to own that you've been thrown over like a broken chair. I must carry this business through alone—as usual. If there isn't a war, and Torp finds out, I shall look foolish, that's all. If there is a war I mustn't interfere with another man's chances. Business is business, and I want to be alone— I want to be alone. What a row they're making!'

Somebody hammered at the studio door.

'Come out and frolic, Dickie,' said the Nilghai.

'I should like to, but I can't. I'm not feeling frolicsome.'

'Then I'll tell the boys and they'll draw you like a badger.'

'Please not, old man. On my word, I'd sooner be left alone just now.'

'Very good. Can we send anything in to you? Fizz, for instance. Cassavetti is beginning to sing songs of the Sunny South already.'

For one minute Dick considered the proposition seriously.

'No, thanks. I've a headache already.'

'Virtuous child. That's the effect of emotion on the young. All my congratulations, Dick. I also was concerned in the conspiracy for your welfare.'

'Go to the dévil and—oh, send Binkie in here.'

The little dog entered on elastic feet, riotous from having been made much of all the evening. He had helped to sing the choruses; but scarcely inside the studio he realised that this was no place for tail-wagging, and settled himself on Dick's lap till it was bedtime. Then he went to bed with Dick, who counted every hour as it struck, and rose in the morning with a painfully clear head to receive Torpenhow's more formal congratulations and a particular account of the last night's revels.

'You aren't looking very happy for a newly-accepted man,' said Torpenhow.

'Never mind that—it's my own affair, and I'm all right. Do you really go?'

'Yes. With the old Central Southern as usual. They wired and I accepted on better terms than before.'

'When do you start?'

'The day after to-morrow—for Brindisi.'

'Thank God.' Dick spoke from the bottom of his heart.

'Well, that's not a pretty way of saying you're glad to get rid of me. But men in your condition are allowed to be selfish.'

'I didn't mean that. Will you get a hundred pounds cashed for me before you leave?'

'That's a slender amount for housekeeping, isn't it?'

'Oh, it's only for—marriage expenses.'

Torpenhow brought him the money, counted it out in fives and tens, and carefully put it away in the writing-table.

'Now I suppose I shall have to listen to his ravings about his girl until I go. Heaven send us patience with a man in love!' said he to himself.

But never a word did Dick say of Maisie or marriage. He hung in the doorway of Torpenhow's room when the latter was packing, and asked innumerable questions about the coming campaign, till Torpenhow began to feel annoyed.

'You're a secretive animal, Dickie, and you consume your own smoke, don't you?' he said on the last evening.

'I—I suppose so. By the way, how long do you think this war will last?'

'Days, weeks, or months. One can never tell. It may go on for years.'

'I wish I were going.'

'Good heavens! You're the most unaccountable creature! Hasn't it occurred to you that you're going to be married—thanks to me?'

'Of course, yes. I'm going to be married—so I am. Going to be married. I'm awfully grateful to you. Haven't I told you that?'

'You might be going to be hanged by the look of you,' said Torpenhow.

And the next day Torpenhow bade him good-bye and left him to the loneliness he had so much desired.

CHAPTER XIV

Yet at the last, ere our spearmen had found him,
Yet at the last, ere a sword-thrust could save,
Yet at the last, with his masters around him,
He of the Faith spoke as master to slave;
Yet at the last, tho' the Kafirs had maimed him,
Broken by bondage and wrecked by the reiver,—
Yet at the last, tho' the darkness had claimed him,
He called upon Allah and died a believer.

'Kizilbashi.'

'BEG your pardon, Mr. Heldar, but—but isn't nothin' going to happen?' said Mr. Beeton.

'No!' Dick had just waked to another morning of blank despair and his temper was of the shortest.

''Taint my regular business o' course, sir; and what I say is, "Mind your own business and let other people mind theirs"; but just before Mr. Torpenhow went away he give me to understand, like, that you might be moving into a house of your own, so to speak—a sort of house with rooms upstairs and downstairs where you'd be better attended to, though I try to act just by all our tenants. Don't I?'

'Ah! That must have been a madhouse. I shan't trouble you to take me there yet. Get me my breakfast, please, and leave me alone.'

'I hope I haven't done anything wrong, sir, but you

know, I hope, that as far as a man can I tries to do the proper thing by all the gentlemen in chambers—and more particular those whose lot is hard—such as you, for instance, Mr. Heldar. You likes soft-roe bloater, don't you? Soft-roe bloaters is scarcer than hard-roe, but what I say is, "Never mind a little extra trouble so long as you gives satisfaction to the tenants." '

Mr. Beeton withdrew and left Dick to himself. Torpenhow had been long away; there was no more rioting in the chambers, and Dick had settled down to his new life, which he was weak enough to consider nothing better than death.

It is hard to live alone in the dark, confusing the day and night; dropping to sleep through sheer weariness at mid-day, and rising restless in the chill of the dawn. At first Dick, on his awakenings, would grope along the corridors of the chambers till he heard some one snore. Then he would know that the day had not yet come and return wearily to his bedroom. Later he learned not to stir till there was a noise and movement in the house and Mr. Beeton advised him to get up. Once dressed—and dressing, now that Torpenhow was away, was a lengthy business, because collars, ties, and the like, hid themselves in far corners of the room, and search meant head-beating against chairs and trunks—once dressed, there was nothing whatever to do except to sit still and brood till the three daily meals came. Centuries separated breakfast from lunch, and lunch from dinner, and though a man prayed for hundreds of years that his mind might be taken from him, God would never hear. Rather the mind was quickened and the revolving thoughts ground against each other as millstones grind when there is no corn between; and yet the brain would not wear out and

give him rest. It continued to think, at length, with imagery and all manner of reminiscences. It recalled Maisie and past success, reckless travels by land and sea, the glory of doing work and feeling that it was good, and suggested all that might have happened had the eyes only been faithful to their duty. When thinking ceased through sheer weariness, there poured into Dick's soul tide on tide of overwhelming, purposeless fear—dread of starvation always, terror lest the unseen ceiling should crush down upon him, fear of fire in the chambers and a louse's death in red flame, and agonies of fiercer horror that had nothing to do with any fear of death. Then Dick bowed his head, and clutching the arms of his chair fought with his sweating self till the tinkle of plates told him that something to eat was being set before him.

Mr. Beeton would bring the meal when he had time to spare, and Dick learned to hang upon his speech which dealt with badly-fitted gas-plugs, waste-pipes out of repair, little tricks for driving picture-nails into walls, and the sins of the charwoman or the housemaids. In the lack of better things the small gossip of a servants' hall becomes immensely interesting, and the screwing of a washer on a tap an event to be talked over for days.

Once or twice a week, too, Mr. Beeton would take Dick out with him when he went marketing in the morning to haggle with tradesmen over fish, lamp-wicks, mustard, tapioca, and so forth, while Dick rested his weight first on one foot and then on the other, and played aimlessly with the tins and string-ball on the counter. Then they would, perhaps, meet one of Mr. Beeton's friends, and Dick, standing aside a little, would hold his peace till Mr. Beeton was willing to go on again.

The life did not increase his self-respect. He aban-

doned shaving as a dangerous exercise, and being shaved in a barber's shop meant exposure of his infirmity. He could not see that his clothes were properly brushed, and since he had never taken any care of his personal appearance he became every known variety of sloven. A blind man cannot eat with cleanliness till he has been some months used to the darkness. If he demand attendance and grow angry at the want of it, he must assert himself and stand upright. Then the meanest menial can see that he is blind and, therefore, of no consequence. A wise man will keep his eyes on the floor and sit still. For amusement he may pick coal lump by lump out of the scuttle with the tongs, and pile it in a little heap in the fender, keeping count of the lumps, which must all be put back again, one by one and very carefully. He may set himself sums if he cares to work them out; he may talk to himself or to the cat if she chooses to visit him; and if his trade has been that of an artist, he may sketch in the air with his forefinger; but that is too much like drawing a pig with the eyes shut. He may go to his bookshelves and count his books, ranging them in order of their size, or to his wardrobe and count his shirts, laying them in piles of two or three on the bed, as they suffer from frayed cuffs or lost buttons. Even this entertainment wearies after a time; and all the times are very, very long.

Dick was allowed to sort a tool-chest where Mr. Beeton kept hammers, taps and nuts, lengths of gas-pipes, oil-bottles and string.

'If I don't have everything just where I know where to look for it, why, then, I can't find anything when I do want it. You've no idea, sir, the amount of little things that these Chambers uses up,' said Mr. Beeton. Fum-

bling at the handle of the door as he went out: 'It's hard on you, sir, I do think it's hard on you. Ain't you going to do anything, sir?'

'I'll pay my rent and messing. Isn't that enough?'

'I wasn't doubting for a moment that you couldn't pay your way, sir; but I 'ave often said to my wife, "It's 'ard on 'im because it isn't as if he was an old man, nor yet a middle-aged one, but quite a young gentleman. That's where it comes so 'ard." '

'I suppose so,' said Dick absently. This particular nerve through long battering had ceased to feel—much.

'I was thinking,' continued Mr. Beeton, still making as if to go, 'that you might like to hear my boy Alf read you the papers sometimes of an evening. He do read beautiful, seeing he's only nine.'

'I should be very grateful,' said Dick. 'Only let me make it worth his while.'

'We wasn't thinking of that, sir, but of course it's in your own 'ands; but only to 'ear Alf sing "A Boy's best Friend is 'is Mother"! Ah!'

'I'll hear him sing that too. Let him come in this evening with the newspapers.'

Alf was not a nice child, being puffed up with many school-board certificates for good conduct, and inordinately proud of his singing. Mr. Beeton remained, beaming, while the child wailed his way through a song of some eight eight-line verses in the usual whine of the young Cockney, and, after compliments, left him to read Dick the foreign telegrams. Ten minutes later Alf returned to his parents rather pale and scared.

' 'E said 'e couldn't stand it no more,' he explained.

'He never said you read badly, Alf?' Mrs. Beeton spoke.

'No. 'E said I read beautiful. Said 'e never 'eard

any one read like that, but 'e said 'e couldn't abide the stuff in the papers.'

'P'raps he's lost some money in the Stocks. Were you readin' him about Stocks, Alf?'

'No; it was all about fightin' out there where the soldiers is gone—a great long piece with all the lines close together and very hard words in it. 'E give me 'arf a crown because I read so well. And 'e says the next time there's anything 'e wants read 'e'll send for me.'

'That's good hearing, but I do think for all the half-crown—put it into the kicking-donkey money-box, Alf, and let me see you do it—he might have kept you longer. Why, he couldn't have begun to understand how beautiful you read.'

'He's best left to hisself—gentlemen always are when they're downhearted,' said Mr. Beeton.

Alf's rigorously limited powers of comprehending Torpenhow's special correspondence had waked the devil of unrest in Dick. He could hear, through the boy's nasal chant, the camels grunting in the squares behind the soldiers outside Suakin; could hear the men swearing and chaffing across the cooking-pots, and could smell the acrid wood-smoke as it drifted over the camp before the wind of the desert.

That night he prayed to God that his mind might be taken from him, offering for proof that he was worthy of this favour the fact that he had not shot himself long ago. That prayer was not answered, and indeed Dick knew in his heart of hearts that only a lingering sense of humour and no special virtue had kept him alive. Suicide, he had persuaded himself, would be a ludicrous insult to the gravity of the situation as well as a weak-kneed confession of fear.

'Just for the fun of the thing,' he said to the cat, who had taken Binkie's place in his establishment, 'I should like to know how long this is going to last. I can live for a year on the hundred pounds Torp cashed for me. I must have two or three thousand at least at the Bank—twenty or thirty years more provided for, that is to say. Then I fall back on my hundred and twenty a year which will be more by that time. Let's consider. Twenty-five—thirty-five—a man's in his prime then, they say—forty-five—a middle-aged man just entering politics—fifty-five—"died at the comparatively early age of fifty-five," according to the newspapers. Bah! How these Christians funk death! Sixty-five—we're only getting on in years. Seventy-five is just possible though. Great Hell, cat O! fifty years more of solitary confinement in the dark! You'll die, and Beeton will die, and Torp will die, and Mai—everybody else will die, but I shall be alive and kicking with nothing to do. I'm very sorry for myself. I should like some one else to be sorry for me. Evidently I'm not going mad before I die, but the pain's just as bad as ever. Some day when you're vivisected cat O! they'll tie you down on a little table and cut you open—but don't be afraid; they'll take precious good care that you don't die. You'll live, and you'll be very sorry then that you weren't sorry for me. Perhaps Torp will come back or . . . I wish I could go to Torp and the Nilghai, even though I were in their way.'

Pussy left the room before the speech was ended, and Alf, as he entered, found Dick addressing the empty hearth-rug.

'There's a letter for you, sir,' he said. 'Perhaps you'd like me to read it.'

'Lend it to me for a minute and I'll tell you.'

The outstretched hand shook just a little and the voice was not over-steady. It was within the limits of human possibility that—that was no letter from Maisie. He knew the heft of three closed envelopes only too well. It was a foolish hope that the girl should write to him, for he did not realise that there is a wrong which admits of no reparation though the evildoer may with tears and the heart's best love strive to mend all. It is best to forget that wrong whether it be caused or endured, since it is as remediless as bad work once put forward.

'Read it, then,' said Dick, and Alf began intoning according to the rules of the Board School—

' "I could have given you love, I could have given you loyalty, such as you never dreamed of. Do you suppose I cared what you were? But you chose to whistle everything down the wind for nothing. My only excuse for you is that you are so young." '

'That's all,' he said, returning the paper to be dropped into the fire.

'What was in the letter?' asked Mrs. Beeton when Alf returned.

'I don't know. I think it was a circular or a tract about not whistlin' at everything when you're young.'

'I must have stepped on something when I was alive and walking about, and it has bounced up and hit me. God help it, whatever it is—unless it was all a joke. But I don't know any one who'd take the trouble to play a joke on me. . . . Love and loyalty for nothing. It sounds tempting enough. I wonder whether I have lost anything really?'

Dick considered for a long time, but could not remember when or how he had put himself in the way of winning these trifles at a woman's hands.

Still, the letter as touching on matters that he preferred not to think about stung him into a fit of frenzy that lasted for a day and night. When his heart was so full of despair that it would hold no more, body and soul together seemed to be dropping without check through the darkness. Then came fear of darkness and desperate attempts to reach the light again. But there was no light to be reached. When that agony had left him sweating and breathless, the downward flight would recommence till the gathering torture of it spurred him into another fight as hopeless as the first. Followed some few minutes of sleep in which he dreamed that he saw. Then the procession of events would repeat itself till he was utterly worn out, and the brain took up its everlasting consideration of Maisie and might-have-beens.

At the end of everything Mr. Beeton came to his room and volunteered to take him out. 'Not marketing this time, but we'll go into the Parks if you like.'

'Be damned if I do,' quoth Dick. 'Keep to the streets and walk up and down. I like to hear the people round me.'

This was not altogether true. The blind in the first stages of their infirmity dislike those who can move with a free stride and unlifted arms—but Dick had no earthly desire to go to the Parks. Once and only once since Maisie had shut the door he had gone there under Alf's charge. Alf forgot him and fished for minnows in the Serpentine with some companions. After half an hour's waiting Dick, almost weeping with rage and wrath, caught a passer-by who introduced him to a friendly policeman, who led him to a four-wheeler opposite the Albert Hall. He never told Mr. Beeton of Alf's forgetfulness, but . . . this was not the manner in which he was used to walk the Parks aforetime.

'What streets would you like to walk down, then?' said Mr. Beeton sympathetically. His own ideas of a riotous holiday meant picnicking on the grass of the Green Park with his family, and half a dozen paper bags full of food.

'Keep to the river,' said Dick, and they kept to the river, and the rush of it was in his ears till they came to Blackfriars Bridge and struck thence on to the Waterloo Road, Mr. Beeton explaining the beauties of the scenery as he went on.

'And walking on the other side of the pavement,' said he, 'unless I'm much mistaken, is the young woman that used to come to your rooms to be drawed. I never forgets a face and I never remembers a name, except paying tenants o' course!'

'Stop her,' said Dick. 'It's Bessie Broke. Tell her I'd like to speak to her again. Quick, man!'

Mr. Beeton crossed the road under the noses of the omnibuses and arrested Bessie then on her way northward. She recognised him as the man in authority who used to glare at her when she passed up Dick's staircase, and her first impulse was to run.

'Wasn't you Mr. Heldar's model?' said Mr. Beeton, planting himself in front of her. 'You was. He's on the other side of the road and he'd like to see you.'

'Why?' said Bessie faintly. She remembered—indeed had never for long forgotten—an affair connected with a newly-finished picture.

'Because he has asked me to do so, and because he's most particular blind.'

'Drunk?'

'No. 'Orspital blind. He can't see. That's him over there.'

Dick was leaning against the parapet of the bridge as Mr. Beeton pointed him out—a stub-bearded, bowed creature wearing a dirty magenta-coloured neckcloth outside an unbrushed coat. There was nothing to fear from such an one. Even if he chased her, Bessie thought he could not follow far. She crossed over and Dick's face lighted up. It was long since a woman of any kind had taken the trouble to speak to him.

'I hope you're well, Mr. Heldar?' said Bessie, a little puzzled. Mr. Beeton stood by with the air of an ambassador and breathed responsibly.

'I'm very well indeed, and, by Jove! I'm glad to see —hear you, I mean, Bess. You never thought it worth while to turn up and see us again after you got your money. I don't know why you should. Are you going anywhere in particular just now?'

'I was going for a walk,' said Bessie.

'Not the old business?' Dick spoke under his breath.

'Lor', no! I paid my premium'—Bessie was very proud of that word—'for a barmaid, sleeping in, and I'm at the bar now quite respectable. Indeed I am.'

Mr. Beeton had no special reason to believe in the loftiness of human nature. Therefore he dissolved himself like a mist and returned to his gas-plugs without a word of apology. Bessie watched the flight with a certain uneasiness; but so long as Dick appeared to be ignorant of the harm that had been done to him . . .

'It's hard work pulling the beer-handles,' she went on, 'and they've got one of them penny-in-the-slot cash-machines, so if you get wrong by a penny at the end of the day—but then I don't believe the machinery is right. Do you?'

'I've only seen it work. Mr. Beeton?'

'He's gone.'

'I'm afraid I must ask you to help me home, then. I'll make it worth your while. You see?' The sightless eyes turned towards her and Bessie saw.

'It isn't taking you out of your way?' he said hesitatingly. 'I can ask a policeman if it is.'

'Not at all. I come on at seven and I'm off at four. That's easy hours.'

'Good God!—but I'm on all the time. I wish I had some work to do too. Let's go home, Bess.'

He turned and cannoned into a man on the sidewalk, recoiling with an oath. Bessie took his arm and said nothing—as she had said nothing when he had ordered her to turn her face a little more to the light. They walked for some time in silence, the girl steering him deftly through the crowd.

'And where's—where's Mr. Torpenhow?' she inquired at last.

'He has gone away to the desert.'

'Where's that ?'

Dick pointed to the right. 'East—out of the mouth of the river,' said he. 'Then west, then south, and then east again, all along the underside of Europe. Then south again. God knows how far.' The explanation did not enlighten Bessie in the least, but she held her tongue and looked to Dick's path till they came to the chambers.

'We'll have tea and muffins,' he said joyously. 'I can't tell you, Bessie, how glad I am to find you again. What made you go away so suddenly?'

'I didn't think you'd want me any more,' she said, emboldened by his ignorance.

'I didn't as a matter of fact—but afterwards—At any rate I'm glad you've come. You know the stairs.'

So Bessie led him home to his own place—there was no one to hinder—and shut the door of the studio.

'What a mess!' was her first word. 'All these things haven't been looked after for months and months.'

'No, only weeks, Bess. You can't expect them to care.'

'I don't know what you expect them to do. They ought to know what you've paid them for. The dust's just awful. It's all over the easel.'

'I don't use it much now.'

'All over the pictures and the floor, and all over your coat. I'd like to speak to them housemaids.'

'Ring for tea, then.' Dick felt his way to the one chair he used by custom.

Bessie saw the action and, as far as in her lay, was touched. But there remained always a keen sense of new-found superiority, and it was in her voice when she spoke.

'How long have you been like this?' she said wrathfully, as though the blindness were some fault of the housemaids.

'How?'

'As you are.'

'The day after you went away with the cheque, almost as soon as my picture was finished; I hardly saw her alive.'

'Then they've been cheating you ever since, that's all. I know their nice little ways.'

A woman may love one man and despise another, but on general feminine principles she will do her best to save the man she despises from being defrauded. Her loved one can look to himself, but the other man, being obviously an idiot, needs protection.

'I don't think Mr. Beeton cheats much,' said Dick.

Bessie was flouncing up and down the room, and he was conscious of a keen sense of enjoyment as he heard the swish of her skirts and the light step between.

'Tea and muffins,' she said shortly, when the ring at the bell was answered; 'two teaspoonfuls and one over for the pot. I don't want the old teapot that was here when I used to come. It don't draw. Get another.'

The housemaid went away scandalised, and Dick chuckled. Then he began to cough as Bessie banged up and down the studio disturbing the dust.

'What are you trying to do?'

'Put things straight. This is like unfurnished lodgings. How could you let it go so?'

'How could I help it? Dust away.'

She dusted furiously, and in the midst of all the pother entered Mrs. Beeton. Her husband on his return had explained the situation, winding up with the peculiarly felicitous proverb, 'Do unto others as you would be done by.' She had descended to put into her place the person who demanded muffins and an uncracked teapot as though she had a right to both.

'Muffins ready yet?' said Bess, still dusting. She was no longer a drab of the streets, but a young lady who, thanks to Dick's cheque, had paid her premium and was entitled to pull beer-handles with the best. Being neatly dressed in black she did not hesitate to face Mrs. Beeton, and there passed between the two women certain regards that Dick would have appreciated. The situation adjusted itself by eye. Bessie had won, and Mrs. Beeton returned to cook muffins and make scathing remarks about models, hussies, trollops, and the like, to her husband.

'There's nothing to be got of interfering with him,

Liza,' he said. 'Alf, you go along into the street to play. When he isn't crossed he's as kindly as kind, but when he's crossed he's the devil and all. We took too many little things out of his rooms since he was blind to be that particular about what he does. They ain't no objects to a blind man, of course, but if it was to come into court we'd get the sack. Yes, I did introduce him to that girl because I'm a feelin' man myself.'

'Much too feelin'!' Mrs. Beeton slapped the muffins into the dish, and thought of comely housemaids long since dismissed on suspicion.

'I ain't ashamed of it, and it isn't for us to judge him hard so long as he pays quiet and regular as he do. I know how to manage young gentlemen, you know how to cook for them, and what I says is, let each stick to his own business and then there won't be any trouble. Take them muffins down, Liza, and be sure you have no words with that young woman. His lot is cruel hard, and if he's crossed he do swear worse than any one I've ever served.'

'That's a little better,' said Bessie, sitting down to the tea. 'You needn't wait, thank you, Mrs. Beeton.'

'I had no intention of doing such, I do assure you.'

Bessie made no answer whatever. This, she knew, was the way in which real ladies routed their foes, and when one is a barmaid at a first-class public-house one may become a real lady at ten minutes' notice.

Her eyes fell on Dick opposite her and she was both shocked and displeased. There were droppings of food all down the front of his coat; the mouth, under the ragged ill-grown beard, drooped sullenly; the forehead was lined and contracted; and on the lean temples the hair was a dusty, indeterminate colour that might or might not have

been called gray. The utter misery and self-abandonment of the man appealed to her, and at the bottom of her heart lay the wicked feeling that he was humbled and brought low who had once humbled her.

'Oh! it is good to hear you moving about,' said Dick, rubbing his hands. 'Tell us all about your bar successes, Bessie, and the way you live now.'

'Never mind that. I'm quite respectable, as you'd see by looking at me. You don't seem to live too well. What made you go blind that sudden? Why isn't there any one to look after you?'

Dick was too thankful for the sound of her voice to resent the tone of it.

'I was cut across the head a long time ago, and that ruined my eyes. I don't suppose anybody thinks it worth while to look after me any more. Why should they?—and Mr. Beeton really does everything I want.'

'Don't you know any gentlemen and ladies, then, while you was—well?'

'A few, but I don't care to have them looking at me.'

'I suppose that's why you've growed a beard. Take it off, it don't become you.'

'Good gracious, child, do you imagine that I think of what becomes me these days?'

'You ought. Get that taken off before I come here again. I suppose I can come, can't I?'

'I'd be only too grateful if you did. I don't think I treated you very well in the old days. I used to make you angry.'

'Very angry, you did.'

'I'm sorry for it, then. Come and see me when you can and as often as you can. God knows, there isn't a soul in the world to take that trouble except you and Mr. Beeton.'

'A lot of trouble he's taking and she too.' This with a toss of the head. 'They've let you do anyhow, and they haven't done anything for you. I've only to look to see that much. I'll come, and I'll be glad to come, but you must go and be shaved, and you must get some other clothes—those ones aren't fit to be seen.'

'I have heaps somewhere,' he said helplessly.

'I know you have. Tell Mr. Beeton to give you a new suit and I'll brush it and keep it clean. You may be as blind as a barn-door, Mr. Heldar, but it doesn't excuse you looking like a sweep.'

'Do I look like a sweep then?'

'Oh, I'm sorry for you. I'm that sorry for you!' she cried impulsively, and took Dick's hands. Mechanically, he lowered his head as if to kiss—she was the only woman who had taken pity on him, and he was not too proud for a little pity now. She stood up to go.

'Nothing o' that kind till you look more like a gentleman. It's quite easy when you get shaved, and some clothes.'

He could hear her drawing on her gloves and rose to say good-bye. She passed behind him, kissed him audaciously on the back of the neck, and ran away as swiftly as on the day when she had destroyed the Melancolia.

'To think of me kissing Mr. Heldar,' she said to herself, 'after all he's done to me and all! Well, I'm sorry for him, and if he was shaved he wouldn't be so bad to look at, but . . . Oh them Beetons, how shameful they've treated him! I know Beeton's wearing his shirts on his back to-day just as well as if I'd aired it. To-morrow, I'll see . . . I wonder if he has much of his own. It might be worth more than the bar—I wouldn't have to do any work—and just as respectable if no one knew.'

Dick was not grateful to Bessie for her parting gift. He was acutely conscious of it in the nape of his neck throughout the night, but it seemed, among very many other things, to enforce the wisdom of getting shaved. He was shaved accordingly in the morning, and felt the better for it. A fresh suit of clothes, white linen, and the knowledge that some one in the world said that she took an interest in his personal appearance, made him carry himself almost upright; for the brain was relieved for a while from thinking of Maisie, who, under other circumstances, might have given that kiss and a million others.

'Let us consider,' said he after lunch. 'The girl can't care, and it's a toss-up whether she comes again or not, but if money can buy her to look after me she shall be bought. Nobody else in the world would take the trouble, and I can make it worth her while. She's a child of the gutter holding brevet rank as a barmaid; so she shall have everything she wants if she'll only come and talk and look after me.' He rubbed his newly-shorn chin and began to perplex himself with the thought of her not coming. 'I suppose I did look rather a sweep,' he went on. 'I had no reason to look otherwise. I knew things dropped on my clothes, but it didn't matter. It would be cruel if she didn't come. She must. Maisie came once, and that was enough for her. She was quite right. She had something to work for. This creature has only beer-handles to pull, unless she has deluded some young man into keeping company with her. Fancy being cheated for the sake of a counter-jumper! We're falling pretty low.'

Something cried aloud within him:—This will hurt more than anything that has gone before. It will recall

and remind and suggest and tantalise, and in the end drive you mad.

'I know it, I know it!' Dick cried, clenching his hands despairingly; 'but good heavens! is a poor blind beggar never to get anything out of his life except three meals a day and a greasy waistcoat? I wish she'd come.'

Early in the afternoon time she came, because there was no young man in her life just then, and she thought of material advantages which would allow her to be idle for the rest of her days.

'I shouldn't have known you,' she said approvingly. 'You look as you used to look—a gentleman that was proud of himself.'

'Don't you think I deserve another kiss then?' said Dick, flushing a little.

'Maybe—but you won't get it yet. Sit down and let's see what I can do for you. I'm certain sure Mr. Beeton cheats you, now that you can't go through the housekeeping books every month. Isn't that true?'

'You'd better come and housekeep for me then, Bessie.'

''Couldn't do it in these chambers—you know that as well as I do.'

'I know, but we might go somewhere else, if you thought it worth your while.'

'I'd try to look after you, anyhow; but I shouldn't care to have to work for both of us.' This was tentative.

Dick laughed.

'Do you remember where I used to keep my bank-book?' said he. 'Torp took it to be balanced just before he went away. Look and see.'

'It was generally under the tobacco-jar. Ah!'

'Well?'

'Oh! Four thousand two hundred and ten pounds nine shillings and a penny! Oh my!'

'You can have the penny. That's not bad for one year's work. Is that and a hundred and twenty pounds a year good enough?'

The idleness and the pretty clothes were almost within her reach now, but she must, by being housewifely, show that she deserved them.

'Yes; but you'd have to move, and if we took an inventory, I think we'd find that Mr. Beeton has been prigging little things out of the rooms here and there. They don't look as full as they used.'

'Never mind, we'll let him have them. The only thing I'm particularly anxious to take away is that picture I used you for—when you used to swear at me. We'll pull out of this place, Bess, and get away as far as ever we can.'

'Oh yes,' she said uneasily.

'I don't know where I can go to get away from myself, but I'll try, and you shall have all the pretty frocks that you care for. You'll like that. Give me that kiss now, Bess. Ye gods! it's good to put one's arm round a woman's waist again.'

Then came the fulfilment of the prophecy within the brain. If his arm were thus round Maisie's waist and a kiss had just been given and taken between them,—why then. . . . He pressed the girl more closely to himself because the pain whipped him. She was wondering how to explain a little accident to the Melancolia. At any rate, if this man really desired the solace of her company—and certainly he would relapse into his original slough if she withdrew it—he would not be more than just a little vexed. It would be delightful at least to see

what would happen, and by her teachings it was good for a man to stand in certain awe of his companion.

She laughed nervously, and slipped out of his reach.

'I shouldn't worrit about that picture if I was you,' she began, in the hope of turning his attention.

'It's at the back of all my canvases somewhere. Find it, Bess; you know it as well as I do.'

'I know—but—'

'But what? You've wit enough to manage the sale of it to a dealer. Women haggle much better than men. It might be a matter of eight or nine hundred pounds to —to us. I simply didn't like to think about it for a long time. It was mixed up with my life so.—But we'll cover up our tracks and get rid of everything, eh? Make a fresh start from the beginning, Bess.'

Then she began to repent very much indeed, because she knew the value of money. Still, it was probable that the blind man was overestimating the value of his work. Gentlemen, she knew, were absurdly particular about their things. She giggled as a nervous housemaid giggles when she tries to explain the breakage of a pipe.

'I'm very sorry, but you remember I was—I was angry with you before Mr. Torpenhow went away?'

'You were very angry, child; and on my word I think you had some right to be.'

'Then I—but aren't you sure Mr. Torpenhow didn't tell you?'

'Tell me what? Good gracious, what are you making such a fuss about when you might just as well be giving me another kiss.'

He was beginning to learn, not for the first time in his experience, that kissing is a cumulative poison. The more you get of it, the more you want. Bessie gave the kiss

promptly, whispering, as she did so, 'I was so angry I rubbed out that picture with the turpentine. You aren't angry, are you?'

'What? Say that again.' The man's hand had closed on her wrist.

'I rubbed it out with turps and the knife,' faltered Bessie. 'I thought you'd only have to do it over again. You did do it over again, didn't you? Oh, let go of my wrist; you're hurting me.'

'Isn't there anything left of the thing?'

'N'nothing that looks like anything. I'm sorry—I didn't know you'd take on about it; I only meant to do it in fun. You aren't going to hit me?'

'Hit you! No! Let's think.'

He did not relax his hold upon her wrist, but stood staring at the carpet. Then he shook his head as a young steer shakes it when the lash of the stock-whip across his nose warns him back to the path to the shambles that he would escape. For weeks he had forced himself not to think of the Melancolia, because she was a part of his dead life. With Bessie's return and certain new prospects that had developed themselves the Melancolia—lovelier in his imagination than she had ever been on canvas—reappeared. By her aid he might have procured more money wherewith to amuse Bess and to forget Maisie, as well as another taste of an almost forgotten success. Now, thanks to a vicious little housemaid's folly, there was nothing to look for—not even the hope that he might some day take an abiding interest in the housemaid. Worst of all, he had been made to appear ridiculous in Maisie's eyes. A woman will forgive the man who has ruined her life so long as he gives her love: a man may forgive those who ruin the love of

his life, but he will never forgive the destruction of his work.

'Tck—tck—tck,' said Dick between his teeth, and then laughed softly. 'It's an omen, Bessie, and—a good many things considered, it serves me right for doing what I have done. By Jove! that accounts for Maisie's running away. She must have thought me perfectly mad—small blame to her! The whole picture ruined, isn't it so? What made you do it?'

'Because I was that angry. I'm not angry now—I'm awful sorry.'

'I wonder.—It doesn't matter, anyhow. I'm to blame for making the mistake.'

'What mistake?'

'Something you wouldn't understand, dear. Great heavens! to think that a little piece of dirt like you could throw me out of my stride!' Dick was talking to himself as Bessie tried to shake off his grip on her wrist.

'I ain't a piece of dirt, and you shouldn't call me so! I did it 'cause I hated you, and I'm only sorry now 'cause you're—'cause you're—'

'Exactly—because I'm blind. There's nothing like tact in little things.'

Bessie began to sob. She did not like being shackled against her will; she was afraid of the blind face and the look upon it, and was sorry too that her great revenge had only made Dick laugh.

'Don't cry,' he said, and took her into his arms. 'You only did what you thought right.'

'I—I ain't a little piece of dirt, and if you say that I'll never come to see you again.'

'You don't know what you've done to me. I'm not angry—indeed, I'm not. Be quiet for a minute.'

Bessie remained in his arms shrinking. Dick's first thought was connected with Maisie, and it hurt him as white-hot iron hurts an open sore.

Not for nothing is a man permitted to ally himself to the wrong woman. The first pang—the first sense of things lost is but the prelude to the play, for the very just Providence who delights in causing pain has decreed that the agony shall return, and that in the midst of keenest pleasure. They know this pain equally who have forsaken or been forsaken by the love of their life, and in their new wives' arms are compelled to realise it. It is better to remain alone and suffer only the misery of being alone, so long as it is possible to find distraction in daily work. When that resource goes the man is to be pitied and left alone.

These things and some others Dick considered while he was holding Bessie to his heart.

'Though you mayn't know it,' he said, raising his head, 'the Lord is a just and a terrible God, Bess; with a very strong sense of humour. It serves me right—how it serves me right! Torp could understand it if he were here; he must have suffered something at your hands, child, but only for a minute or so. I saved him. Set that to my credit, some one.'

'Let me go,' said Bess, her face darkening. 'Let me go.'

'All in good time. Did you ever attend Sunday school?'

'Never. Let me go, I tell you; you're making fun of me.'

'Indeed, I'm not. I'm making fun of myself. . . . Thus. "He saved others, himself he cannot save." It isn't exactly a school-board text.' He released her wrist,

but since he was between her and the door she could not escape. 'What an enormous amount of mischief one little woman can do!'

'I'm sorry; I'm awful sorry about the picture.'

'I'm not. I'm grateful to you for spoiling it. . . . What were we talking about before you mentioned the thing?'

'About getting away—and money. Me and you going away.'

'Of course. We will get away—that is to say, I will.'

'And me?'

'You shall have fifty whole pounds for spoiling a picture.'

'Then you won't—?'

'I'm afraid not, dear. Think of fifty pounds for pretty things all to yourself.'

'You said you couldn't do anything without me.'

'That was true a little while ago. I'm better now, thank you. Get me my hat.'

'S'pose I don't?'

'Beeton will, and you'll lose fifty pounds. That's all. Get it.'

Bessie cursed under her breath. She had pitied the man sincerely, had kissed him with almost equal sincerity, for he was not unhandsome; it pleased her to be in a way and for a time his protector, and above all there were four thousand pounds to be handled by some one. Now through a slip of the tongue and a little feminine desire to give a little, not too much, pain she had lost the money, the blessed idleness and the pretty things, the companionship, and the chance of looking outwardly as respectable as a real lady.

'Now fill me a pipe. Tobacco doesn't taste, but it

doesn't matter, and I'll think things out. What's the day of the week, Bess?'

'Tuesday.'

'Then Thurday's mail-day. What a fool—what a blind fool I have been! Twenty-two pounds covers my passage home again. Allow ten for additional expenses. We must put up at Madame Binat's for old sake's sake. Thirty-two pounds altogether. Add a hundred for the cost of the last trip—Gad, won't Torp stare to see me!—a hundred and thirty-two leaves seventy-eight for baksheesh—I shall need it—and to play with. What are you crying for, Bess? It wasn't your fault, child; it was mine altogether. Oh, you funny little opossum, mop your eyes, and take me out! I want the pass-book and the cheque-book. Stop a minute. Four thousand pounds at four per cent—that's safe interest—means a hundred and sixty pounds a year; one hundred and twenty pounds a year—also safe—is two eighty, and two hundred and eighty pounds added to three hundred a year means gilded luxury for a single woman. Bess, we'll go to the bank.'

Richer by two hundred and ten pounds stored in his money-belt, Dick caused Bessie, now thoroughly bewildered, to hurry from the bank to the P. and O. offices, where he explained things tersely.

'Port Said, single first; cabin as close to the baggage-hatch as possible. What ship's going?'

'The "Colgong," ' said the clerk.

'She's a wet little hooker. Is it Tilbury and a tender, or Galleons and the docks?'

'Galleons. Twelve-forty, Thursday.'

'Thanks. Change, please. I can't see very well—will you count it into my hand?'

'If they all took their passages like that instead of talking about their trunks, life would be worth something,' said the clerk to his neighbour, who was trying to explain to a harassed mother of many that condensed milk is just as good for babes at sea as daily dairy. Being nineteen and unmarried, he spoke with conviction.

'We are now,' quoth Dick, as they returned to the studio, patting the place where his money-belt covered ticket and money, 'beyond the reach of man, or devil, or woman—which is much more important. I've three little affairs to carry through before Thursday, but I needn't ask you to help, Bess. Come here on Thursday morning at nine. We'll breakfast, and you shall take me down to Galleons Station.'

'What are you going to do?'

'Going away of course. What should I stay for?'

'But you can't look after yourself?'

'I can do anything. I didn't realise it before, but I can. I've done a great deal already. Resolution shall be treated to one kiss if Bessie doesn't object.' Strangely enough, Bessie objected and Dick laughed. 'I suppose you're right. Well, come at nine the day after to-morrow and you'll get your money.'

'Shall I sure?'

'I don't bilk, and you won't know whether I do or not unless you come. Oh, but it's long and long to wait! Good-bye, Bessie,—send Beeton here as you go out.'

The housekeeper came.

'What are all the fittings of my rooms worth?' said Dick imperiously.

' 'Tisn't for me to say, sir. Some things is very pretty and some is wore out dreadful.'

'I'm insured for two hundred and seventy.'

'Insurance policies is no criterion, though I don't say—'

'Oh, damn your longwindedness! You've made your pickings out of me and the other tenants. Why, you talked of retiring and buying a public-house the other day. Give a straight answer to a straight question.'

'Fifty,' said Mr. Beeton, without a moment's hesitation.

'Double it; or I'll break up half my sticks and burn the rest.'

He felt his way to a bookstand that supported a pile of sketch-books, and wrenched out one of the mahogany pillars.

'That's sinful, sir,' said the housekeeper, alarmed.

'It's my own. One hundred or—'

'One hundred it is. It'll cost me three and six to get that there pilaster mended.'

'I thought so. What an out-and-out swindler you must have been to spring that price at once!'

'I hope I've done nothing to dissatisfy any of the tenants, least of all you, sir.'

'Never mind that. Get me the money to-morrow, and see that all my clothes are packed in the little brown bullock-trunk. I'm going.'

'But the quarter's notice?'

'I'll pay forfeit. Look after the packing and leave me alone.'

Mr. Beeton discussed this new departure with his wife, who decided that Bessie was at the bottom of it all. Her husband took a more charitable view.

'It's very sudden—but then he was always sudden in his ways. Listen to him now!'

There was a sound of chanting from Dick's room.

'We'll never come back any more, boys,
We'll never come back no more;
We'll go to the deuce on any excuse,
And never come back no more!
Oh say we're afloat or ashore, boys,
Oh say we're afloat or ashore;
But we'll never come back any more, boys,
We'll never come back no more!'

'Mr. Beeton! Mr. Beeton! Where the deuce is my pistol?'

'Quick, he's going to shoot himself—'avin' gone mad!' said Mrs. Beeton.

Mr. Beeton addressed Dick soothingly, but it was some time before the latter, threshing up and down his bedroom, could realise the intention of the promises to 'find everything to-morrow, sir.'

'Oh, you copper-nosed old fool—you impotent Academician!' he shouted at last. 'Do you suppose I want to shoot myself? Take the pistol in your silly shaking hand then. If you touch it, it will go off, because it's loaded. It's among my campaign-kit somewhere—in the parcel at the bottom of the trunk.'

Long ago Dick had carefully possessed himself of a forty-pound weight field-equipment constructed by the knowledge of his own experience. It was this put-away treasure that he was trying to find and rehandle. Mr. Beeton whipped the revolver out of its place on the top of the package, and Dick drove his hand among the khaki coat and breeches, the blue cloth leg-bands, and the heavy flannel shirts doubled over a pair of swan-neck

spurs. Under these and the water-bottle lay a sketch-book and a pigskin case of stationery.

'These we don't want; you can have them, Mr. Beeton. Everything else I'll keep. Pack 'em on the top right-hand side of my trunk. When you've done that come into the studio with your wife. I want you both. Wait a minute; get me a pen and a sheet of notepaper.'

It is not an easy thing to write when you cannot see, and Dick had particular reasons for wishing that his work should be clear. So he began, following his right hand with his left: ' "The badness of this writing is because I am blind and cannot see my pen." H'mph!—Even a lawyer can't mistake that. It must be signed, I suppose, but it needn't be witnessed. Now an inch lower—why did I never learn to use a type-writer?—"This is the last will and testament of me, Richard Heldar. I am in sound bodily and mental health, and there is no previous will to revoke."—That's all right. Damn the pen! Whereabouts on the paper was I?—"I leave everything that I possess in the world, including four thousand pounds, and two thousand seven hundred and twenty-eight pounds held for me"—Oh, I can't get this straight.' He tore off half the sheet and began again with the caution about the handwriting. Then: 'I leave all the money I possess in the world to'—here followed Maisie's name, and the names of the two banks that held his money.

'It mayn't be quite regular, but no one has a shadow of a right to dispute it, and I've given Maisie's address. Come in, Mr. Beeton. This is my signature; you've seen it often enough to know it; I want you and your wife to witness it. Thanks. To-morrow you must take me to the landlord and I'll pay forfeit for leaving

without notice, and I'll lodge this paper with him in case anything happens when I'm away. Now we're going to light up the studio stove. Stay with me, and give me my papers as I want 'em.'

No one knows until he has tried how fine a blaze a year's accumulation of bills, letters, and dockets can make. Dick stuffed into the stove every document in the studio —saving only three unopened letters: destroyed sketch-books, rough note-books, new and half-finished canvases alike.

'What a lot of rubbish a tenant gets about him if he stays long enough in one place, to be sure,' said Mr. Beeton at last.

'He does. Is there anything more left?' Dick felt round the walls.

'Not a thing, and the stove's nigh red-hot.'

'Excellent, and you've lost about a thousand pounds' worth of sketches. Ho! ho! Quite a thousand pounds' worth, if I can remember what I used to be.'

'Yes sir,' politely. Mr. Beeton was quite sure that Dick had gone mad, otherwise he would have never parted with his excellent furniture for a song. The canvas things took up storage room and were much better out of the way.

There remained only to leave the little will in safe hands: that could not be accomplished till to-morrow. Dick groped about the floor picking up the last pieces of paper, assured himself again and again that there remained no written word or sign of his past life in drawer or desk, and sat down before the stove till the fire died out and the contracting iron cracked in the silence of the night.

CHAPTER XV

With a heart of furious fancies,
Whereof I am commander;
With a burning spear and a horse of air,
To the wilderness I wander.
With a knight of ghosts and shadows
I summoned am to tourney—
Ten leagues beyond the wide world's end,
Methinks it is no journey.

'Tom a' Bedlam's Song.

'GOOD-BYE, Bess; I promised you fifty. Here's a hundred—all that I got for my furniture from Beeton. That will keep you in pretty frocks for some time. You've been a good little girl, all things considered, but you've given me and Torpenhow a fair amount of trouble.'

'Give Mr. Torpenhow my love if you see him, won't you?'

'Of course I will, dear. Now take me up the gangplank and into the cabin. Once aboard the lugger and the maid is—and I am free, I mean.'

'Who'll look after you on the ship?'

'The head-steward, if there's any use in money. The doctor when we come to Port Said, if I know anything of P. and O. doctors. After that, the Lord will provide, as He used to do.'

Bess found Dick his cabin in the wild turmoil of a ship full of leavetakers and weeping relatives. Then he kissed her, and laid himself down in his bunk until the decks should be clear. He who had taken so long to move about his own darkened rooms well understood the geography of a ship, and the necessity of seeing to his own comforts was as wine to him. Before the screw began to thrash the ship along the Docks he had been introduced to the head-steward, had royally tipped him, secured a good place at table, opened out his baggage, and settled himself down with joy in the cabin. It was scarcely necessary to feel his way as he moved about, for he knew everything so well. Then God was very kind: a deep sleep of weariness came upon him just as he would have thought of Maisie, and he slept till the steamer had cleared the mouth of the Thames and was lifting to the pulse of the Channel.

The rattle of the engines, the reek of oil and paint, and a very familiar sound in the next cabin roused him to his new inheritance.

'Oh, it's good to be alive again!' He yawned, stretched himself vigorously, and went on deck to be told that they were almost abreast of the lights of Brighton. This is no more open water than Trafalgar Square is a common; the free levels begin at Ushant; but none the less Dick could feel the healing of the sea at work upon him already. A boisterous little cross-swell swung the steamer disrespectfully by the nose; and one wave breaking far aft spattered the quarter-deck and the pile of new deck chairs. He heard the foam fall with the clash of broken glass, was stung in the face by a cupful, and sniffing luxuriously, felt his way to the smoking-room by the wheel. There a strong breeze found him, blew his cap

off and left him bareheaded in the doorway, and the smoking-room steward, understanding that he was a voyager of experience, said that the weather would be stiff in the chops off the Channel and more than half a gale in the Bay. These things fell as they were foretold, and Dick enjoyed himself to the utmost. It is allowable and even necessary at sea to lay firm hold upon tables, stanchions, and ropes in moving from place to place. On land the man who feels with his hands is patently blind. At sea even a blind man who is not sea-sick can jest with the doctor over the weakness of his fellows. Dick told the doctor many tales—and these are coin of more value than silver if properly handled—smoked with him till unholy hours of the night, and so won his short-lived regard that he promised Dick a few hours of his time when they came to Port Said.

And the sea roared or was still as the winds blew, and the engines sang their song day and night, and the sun grew stronger day by day, and Tom the Lascar barber shaved Dick of a morning under the opened hatch-grating where the cool winds blew, and the awnings were spread and the passengers made merry, and at last they came to Port Said.

'Take me,' said Dick to the doctor, 'to Madame Binat's—if you know where that is.'

'Whew!' said the doctor, 'I do. There's not much to choose between 'em; but I suppose you're aware that that's one of the worst houses in the place. They'll rob you to begin with, and knife you later.'

'Not they. Take me there, and I can look after myself.'

So he was brought to Madame Binat's and filled his nostrils with the well-remembered smell of the East, that runs without a change from the Canal head to Hong-

Kong, and his mouth with the villainous Lingua Franca of the Levant. The heat smote him between the shoulder-blades with the buffet of an old friend, his feet slipped on the sand, and his coat-sleeve was warm as new-baked bread when he lifted it to his nose.

Madame Binat smiled with the smile that knows no astonishment when Dick entered the drinking-shop which was one source of her gains. But for a little accident of complete darkness he could hardly realise that he had ever quitted the old life that hummed in his ears. Somebody opened a bottle of peculiarly strong Schiedam. The smell reminded Dick of Monsieur Binat, who, by the way, had spoken of art and degradation. Binat was dead; Madame said as much when the doctor departed, scandalised, so far as a ship's doctor can be at the warmth of Dick's reception. Dick was delighted at it. 'They remember me here after a year. They have forgotten me across the water by this time. Madame, I want a long talk with you when you're at liberty. It is good to be back again.'

In the evening she set an iron-topped cafe-table out on the sands, and Dick and she sat by it, while the house behind them filled with riot, merriment, oaths, and threats. The stars came out and the lights of the shipping in the harbour twinkled by the head of the Canal.

'Yes. The war is good for trade, my friend; but what dost thou do here? We have not forgotten thee.'

'I was over there in England and I went blind.'

'But there was the glory first. We heard of it here, even here—I and Binat; and thou hast used the head of Yellow 'Tina—she is still alive—so often and so well that 'Tina laughed when the papers arrived by the mail-boats. It was always something that we here could rec-

ognise in the paintings. And then there was always the glory and the money for thee.'

'I am not poor—I shall pay you well.'

'Not to me. Thou hast paid for everything.' Under her breath, 'Mon Dieu, to be blind and so young! What horror!'

Dick could not see her face with the pity on it, or his own with the discoloured hair at the temples. He did not feel the need of pity; he was too anxious to get to the front once more, and explained his desire.

'And where? The Canal is full of the English ships. Sometimes they fire as they used to do when the war was here—ten years ago. Beyond Cairo there is fighting, but how canst thou go there without a correspondent's passport? And in the desert there is always fighting, but that is impossible also,' said she.

'I must go to Suakin.' He knew, thanks to Alf's readings, that Torpenhow was at work with the column that was protecting the construction of the Suakin-Berber line. P. and O. steamers do not touch at that port, and, besides, Madame Binat knew everybody whose help or advice was worth anything. They were not respectable folk, but they could cause things to be accomplished, which is much more important when there is work toward.

'But at Suakin they are always fighting. That desert breeds men always—and always more men. And they are so bold! Why to Suakin?'

'My friend is there.'

'Thy friend! Chtt! Thy friend is death, then.'

Madame Binat dropped a fat arm on the table-top, filled Dick's glass anew, and looked at him closely under the stars. There was no need that he should bow his head in assent and say—

'No. He is a man, but—if it should arrive . . . blamest thou?'

'I blame?' she laughed shrilly. 'Who am I that I should blame any one—except those who try to cheat me over their consommations. But it is very terrible.'

'I must go to Suakin. Think for me. A great deal has changed within the year, and the men I knew are not here. The Egyptian lighthouse steamer goes down the Canal to Suakin—and the post-boats—But even then—'

'Do not think any longer. I know, and it is for me to think. Thou shalt go—thou shalt go and see thy friend. Be wise. Sit here until the house is a little quiet—I must attend to my guests—and afterwards go to bed. Thou shalt go, in truth, thou shalt go.'

'To-morrow?'

'As soon as may be.' She was talking as though he were a child.

He sat at the table listening to the voices in the harbour and the streets, and wondering how soon the end would come, till Madame Binat carried him off to bed and ordered him to sleep. The house shouted and sang and danced and revelled, Madame Binat moving through it with one eye on the liquor payments and the girls and the other on Dick's interests. To this latter end she smiled upon scowling and furtive Turkish officers of Fellaheen regiments, was gracious to Cypriote commissariat underlings, and more than kind to camel agents of no nationality whatever.

In the early morning, being then appropriately dressed in a flaming red silk ball-dress, with a front of tarnished gold embroidery and a necklace of plate-glass diamonds, she made chocolate and carried it in to Dick.

'It is only I, and I am of discreet age, eh? Drink and

eat the roll too. Thus in France mothers bring their sons, when those behave wisely, the morning chocolate.' She sat down on the side of the bed whispering:—

'It is all arranged. Thou wilt go by the lighthouse boat. That is a bribe of ten pounds English. The captain is never paid by the Government. The boat comes to Suakin in four days. There will go with thee George, a Greek muleteer. Another bribe of ten pounds. I will pay; they must not know of thy money. George will go with thee as far as he goes with his mules. Then he comes back to me, for his well-beloved is here, and if I do not receive a telegram from Suakin saying that thou art well, the girl answers for George.'

'Thank you.' He reached out sleepily for the cup. 'You are much too kind, Madame.'

'If there were anything that I might do I would say, stay here and be wise; but I do not think that would be best for thee.' She looked at her liquor-stained dress with a sad smile. 'Nay, thou shalt go, in truth, thou shalt go. It is best so. My boy, it is best so.'

She stooped and kissed Dick between the eyes. 'That is for good-morning,' she said, going away. 'When thou art dressed we will speak to George and make everything ready. But first we must open the little trunk. Give me the keys.'

'The amount of kissing lately has been simply scandalous. I shall expect Torp to kiss me next. He is more likely to swear at me for getting in his way, though. Well, it won't last long—Ohe, Madame, help me to my toilette of the guillotine! There will be no chance of dressing properly out yonder.'

He was rummaging among his new campaign-kit, and rowelling his hands with the spurs. There are two ways

of wearing well-oiled ankle-jacks, spotless blue leg-bands, khaki coat and breeches, and a perfectly pipeclayed helmet. The right way is the way of the untired man, master of himself, setting out upon an expedition, well pleased.

'Everything must be very correct,' Dick explained. 'It will become dirty afterwards, but now it is good to feel well dressed. Is everything as it should be?'

He patted the revolver neatly hidden under the fulness of the blouse on the right hip and fingered his collar.

'I can do no more,' Madame said, between laughing and crying. 'Look at thyself—but I forgot.'

'I am very content.' He stroked the creaseless spirals of his leggings. 'Now let us go and see the captain and George and the lighthouse boat. Be quick, Madame.'

'But thou canst not be seen by the harbour walking with me in the daylight. Figure to yourself if some English ladies—'

'There are no English ladies; and if there are, I have forgotten them. Take me there.'

In spite of his burning impatience it was nearly evening ere the lighthouse boat began to move. Madame had said a great deal both to George and the captain touching the arrangements that were to be made for Dick's benefit. Very few men who had the honour of her acquaintance cared to disregard Madame's advice. That sort of contempt might end in being knifed by a stranger in a gambling hell upon surprisingly short provocation.

For six days—two of them were wasted in the crowded Canal—the little steamer worked her way to Suakin, where she was to pick up the superintendent of lighthouses; and Dick made it his business to propitiate George,

who was distracted with fears for the safety of his light-of-love and half inclined to make Dick responsible for his own discomfort. When they arrived George took him under his wing, and together they entered the red-hot seaport, encumbered with the material and wastage of the Suakin-Berber line, from locomotives in disconsolate fragments to mounds of chairs and pot-sleepers.

'If you keep with me,' said George, 'nobody will ask for passports or what you do. They are all very busy.'

'Yes; but I should like to hear some of the Englishmen talk. They might remember me. I was known here a long time ago—when I was some one indeed.'

'A long time ago is a very long time ago here. The graveyards are full. Now listen. This new railway runs out so far as Tanai-el-Hassan—that is seven miles. Then there is a camp. They say that beyond Tanai-el-Hassan the English troops go forward, and everything that they require will be brought to them by this line.'

'Ah! Base camp. I see. That's a better business than fighting Fuzzies in the open.'

'For this reason even the mules go up in the iron-train.'

'Iron what?'

'It is all covered with iron, because it is still being shot at.'

'An armoured train. Better and better! Go on, faithful George.'

'And I go up with my mules to-night. Only those who particularly require to go to the camp go out with the train. They begin to shoot not far from the city.'

'The dears—they always used to!' Dick snuffed the smell of parched dust, heated iron, and flaking paint with delight. Certainly the old life was welcoming him back most generously.

'When I have got my mules together I go up to-night, but you must first send a telegram to Port Said, declaring that I have done you no harm.'

'Madame has you well in hand. Would you stick a knife into me if you had the chance?'

'I have no chance,' said the Greek. 'She is there with that woman.'

'I see. It's a bad thing to be divided between love of woman and the chance of loot. I sympathise with you, George.'

They went to the telegraph-office unquestioned, for all the world was desperately busy and had scarcely time to turn its head, and Suakin was the last place under sky that would be chosen for holiday-ground. On their return the voice of an English subaltern asked Dick what he was doing. The blue goggles were over his eyes and he walked with his hand on George's elbow as he replied—

'Egyptian Government—mules. My orders are to give them over to the A. C. G. at Tanai-el-Hassan. Any occasion to show my papers?'

'Oh, certainly not. I beg your pardon. I'd no right to ask, but not seeing your face before I—'

'I go out in the train to-night, I suppose,' said Dick boldly. 'There will be no difficulty in loading up the mules, will there?'

'You can see the horse-platforms from here. You must have them loaded up early.' The young man went away wondering what sort of broken-down waif this might be who talked like a gentleman and consorted with Greek muleteers. Dick felt unhappy. To outface an English officer is no small thing, but the bluff loses relish when one plays it from the utter dark, and stumbles up and down rough ways, thinking and eternally thinking of

what might have been if things had fallen out otherwise, and all had been as it was not.

George shared his meal with Dick and went off to the mule-lines. His charge sat alone in a shed with his face in his hands. Before his tight-shut eyes danced the face of Maisie, laughing, with parted lips. There was a great bustle and clamour about him. He grew afraid and almost called for George.

'I say, have you got your mules ready?' It was the voice of the subaltern over his shoulder.

'My man's looking after them. The—the fact is I've a touch of ophthalmia and I can't see very well.'

'By Jove! that's bad. You ought to lie up in hospital for a while. I've had a turn of it myself. It's as bad as being blind.'

So I find it. When does this armoured train go?'

'At six o'clock. It takes an hour to cover the seven miles.'

'Are the Fuzzies on the rampage—eh?'

'About three nights a week. 'Fact is I'm in acting command of the night-train. It generally runs back empty to Tanai for the night.'

'Big camp at Tanai, I suppose?'

'Pretty big. It has to feed our desert-column somehow.'

'Is that far off?'

'Between thirty and forty miles—in an infernal thirsty country.'

'Is the country quiet between Tanai and our men?'

'More or less. I shouldn't care to cross it alone, or with a subaltern's command for the matter of that, but the scouts get through in some extraordinary fashion.'

'They always did.'

'Have you been here before, then?'

'I was through most of the trouble when it first broke out.'

'In the service and cashiered,' was the subaltern's first thought, so he refrained from putting any questions.

'There's your man coming up with the mules. It seems rather queer—'

'That I should be mule-leading?' said Dick.

'I didn't mean to say so, but it is. Forgive me—it's beastly impertinence I know, but you speak like a man who has been at a public school. There's no mistaking the tone.'

'I am a public school man.'

'I thought so. I say, I don't want to hurt your feelings, but you're a little down on your luck, aren't you? I saw you sitting with your head in your hands, and that's why I spoke.'

'Thanks. I am about as thoroughly and completely broke as a man need be.'

'Suppose—I mean I'm a public school man myself. Couldn't I perhaps—take it as a loan y'know and—'

'You're much too good, but on my honour I've as much money as I want. . . . I tell you what you could do for me, though, and put me under an everlasting obligation. Let me come into the bogie truck of the train. There is a fore-truck, isn't there?'

'Yes. How d'you know?'

'I've been in an armoured train before. Only let me see—hear some of the fun I mean, and I'll be grateful. I go at my own risk as a non-combatant.'

The young man thought for a minute. 'All right,' he said. 'We're supposed to be an empty train, and there's no one to blow me up at the other end.'

George and a horde of yelling amateur assistants had loaded up the mules, and the narrow-gauge armoured train, plated with three-eighths-inch boiler-plate till it looked like one long coffin, stood ready to start.

Two bogie trucks running before the locomotive were completely covered in with plating, except that the leading one was pierced in front for the nozzle of a machine-gun, and the second at either side for lateral fire. The trucks together made one long iron-vaulted chamber in which a score of artillerymen were rioting.

'Whitechapel—last train! Ah, I see yer kissin' in the first class there!' somebody shouted, just as Dick was clambering into the forward truck.

'Lordy! 'Ere's a real live passenger for the Kew, Tanai, Acton, and Ealin' train. "Echo," sir. Speshul edition! "Star," sir.'—'Shall I get you a foot-warmer?' said another.

'Thanks. I'll pay my footing,' said Dick, and relations of the most amicable were established ere silence came with the arrival of the subaltern, and the train jolted out over the rough track.

'This is an immense improvement on shooting the unimpressionable Fuzzy in the open,' said Dick from his place in the corner.

'Oh, but he's still unimpressed. There he goes!' said the subaltern, as a bullet struck the outside of the truck. 'We always have at least one demonstration against the night-train. Generally they attack the rear-truck where my junior commands. He gets all the fun of the fair.'

'Not to-night, though! Listen!' said Dick. A flight of heavy-handed bullets was succeeded by yelling and shouts. The children of the desert valued their nightly amusement, and the train was an excellent mark.

'Is it worth while giving them half a hopper full?' the subaltern asked of the engine which was driven by a Lieutenant of Sappers.

I should just think so! This is my section of the line. They'll be playing old Harry with my permanent way if we don't stop 'em.'

'Right O!'

'Hrrmph!' said the machine-gun through all its five noses as the subaltern drew the lever home. The empty cartridges clashed on the floor and the smoke blew back through the truck. There was indiscriminate firing at the rear of the train, a return fire from the darkness without and unlimited howling. Dick stretched himself on the floor, wild with delight at the sounds and the smells.

'God is very good—I never thought I'd hear this again. Give 'em hell, men. Oh, give 'em hell!' he cried.

The train stopped for some obstruction on the line ahead and a party went out to reconnoitre, but came back cursing, for spades. The children of the desert had piled sand and gravel on the rails, and twenty minutes were lost in clearing it away. Then the slow progress recommenced, to be varied with more shots, more shoutings, the steady clack and kick of the machine-guns, and a final difficulty with a half-lifted rail ere the train came under the protection of the roaring camp at Tanai-el-Hassan.

'Now, you see why it takes an hour and a half to fetch her through,' said the subaltern, unshipping the cartridge-hopper above his pet gun.

'It was a lark, though. I only wish it had lasted twice as long. How superb it must have looked from outside! said Dick, sighing regretfully.

'It palls after the first few nights. By the way, when

you've settled about your mules, come and see what we can find to eat in my tent. I'm Bennil of the Gunners —in the Artillery lines—and mind you don't fall over my tent-ropes in the dark.'

But it was all dark to Dick. He could only smell the camels, the hay-bales, the cooking, the smoky fires, and the tanned canvas of the tents as he stood, where he had dropped from the train, shouting for George. There was a sound of light-hearted kicking on the iron skin of the rear trucks, with squealing and grunting. George was unloading the mules.

The engine was blowing off steam nearly in Dick's ear; a cold wind of the desert danced between his legs; he was hungry, and felt tired and dirty—so dirty that he tried to brush his coat with his hands. That was a hopeless job; he thrust his hands into his pockets and began to count over the many times that he had waited in strange or remote places for trains or camels, mules or horses, to carry him to his business. In those days he could see—few men more clearly—and the spectacle of an armed camp at dinner under the stars was an ever fresh pleasure to the eye. There was colour, light, and motion, without which no man has much pleasure in living. This night there remained for him only one more journey through the darkness that never lifts to tell a man how far he has travelled. Then he would grip Torpenhow's hand again—Torpenhow, who was alive and strong, and lived in the midst of the action that had once made the reputation of a man called Dick Heldar: not in the least to be confused with the blind, bewildered vagabond who seemed to answer to the same name. Yes, he would find Torpenhow, and come as near to the old life as might be. Afterwards he would forget everything: Bessie, who had

wrecked the Melancolia and so nearly wrecked his life; Beeton, who lived in a strange unreal city full of tin-tacks and gas-plugs, and matters that no men needed; that irrational being who had offered him love and loyalty for nothing, but had not signed her name; and most of all Maisie, who, from her own point of view, was undeniably right in all she did, but oh, at this distance, so tantalisingly fair.

George's hand on his arm pulled him back to the situation.

'And what now?' said George.

'Oh yes, of course. What now? Take me to the camel-men. Take me to where the scouts sit when they come in from the desert. They sit by their camels, and the camels eat grain out of a black blanket held up at the corners, and the men eat by their side just like camels. Take me there!'

The camp was rough and rutty, and Dick stumbled many times over the stumps of scrub. The scouts were sitting by their beasts, as Dick knew they would. The light of the dung-fires flickered on their bearded faces, and the camels bubbled and mumbled beside them at rest. It was no part of Dick's policy to go into the desert with a convoy of supplies. That would lead to impertinent questions, and since a blind non-combatant is not needed at the front, he would probably be forced to return to Suakin. He must go up alone, and go immediately.

'Now for one last bluff—the biggest of all,' he said. 'Peace be with you, brethren!' The watchful George steered him to the circle of the nearest fire. The heads of the camel-sheiks bowed gravely, and the camels, scenting a European, looked sideways curiously like brooding hens, half ready to get to their feet.

'A beast and a driver to go to the fighting line to-night,' said Dick.

'A Mulaid?' said a voice, scornfully naming the best baggage-breed that he knew.

'A Bisharin,' returned Dick with perfect gravity. 'A Bisharin without saddle-galls. Therefore no charge of thine, shock-head.'

Two or three minutes passed. Then—

'We be knee-haltered for the night. There is no going out from the camp.'

'Not for money?'

'H'm! Ah! English money?'

Another depressing interval of silence.

'How much?'

'Twenty-five pounds English paid into the hand of the driver at my journey's end, and as much more into the hand of the camel-sheik here, to be paid when the driver returns.'

This was royal payment, and the sheik, who knew that he would get his commission on the deposit, stirred in Dick's behalf.

'For scarcely one night's journey—fifty pounds. Land and wells and good trees and wives to make a man content for the rest of his days. Who speaks?' said Dick.

'I,' said a voice. 'I will go—but there is no going from the camp.'

'Fool! I know that a camel can break his knee-halter, and the sentries do not fire if one goes in chase. Twenty-five pounds and another twenty-five pounds. But the beast must be a good Bisharin; I will take no baggage-camel.'

Then the bargaining began, and at the end of half an hour the first deposit was paid over to the sheik, who

talked in low tones to the driver. Dick heard the latter say: 'A little way out only. Any baggage-beast will serve. Am I a fool to waste my cattle for a blind man?'

'And though I cannot see'—Dick lifted his voice a little—'yet I carry that which has six eyes, and the driver will sit before me. If we do not reach the English troops in the dawn he will be dead.'

'But where, in God's name, are the troops?'

'Unless thou knowest let another man ride. Dost thou know? Remember it will be life or death to thee.'

'I know,' said the driver sullenly. 'Stand back from my beast. I am going to slip him.'

'Not so swiftly. George, hold the camel's head a moment. I want to feel his cheek.' The hands wandered over the hide till they found the branded half-circle that is the mark of the Bisharin, the light-built riding camel. 'That is well. Cut this one loose. Remember no blessing of God comes on those who try to cheat the blind.'

The men chuckled by the fires at the camel-driver's discomfiture. He had intended to substitute a slow, saddle-galled baggage-colt.

'Stand back!' one shouted, lashing the Bisharin under the belly with a quirt. Dick obeyed as soon as he felt the nose-string tighten in his hand,—and a cry went up, 'Illaha! Aho! He is loose.'

With a roar and a grunt the Bisharin rose to his feet and plunged forward towards the desert, his driver following with shouts and lamentation. George caught Dick's arm and hurried him stumbling and tripping past a disgusted sentry who was used to stampeding camels.

'What's the row now?' he cried.

'Every stitch of my kit on that blasted dromedary,' Dick answered, after the manner of a common soldier.

'Go on, and take care your throat's not cut outside—you and your dromedary's.'

The outcries ceased when the camel had disappeared behind a hillock, and his driver had called him back and made him kneel down.

'Mount first,' said Dick. Then climbing into the second seat and gently screwing the pistol muzzle into the small of his companion's back, 'Go on, in God's name, and swiftly. Good-bye, George. Remember me to Madame, and have a good time with your girl. Get forward, child of the Pit!'

A few minutes later he was shut up in a great silence, hardly broken by the creaking of the saddle and the soft pad of the tireless feet. Dick adjusted himself comfortably to the rock and pitch of the pace, girthed his belt tighter, and felt the darkness slide past. For an hour he was conscious only of the sense of rapid progress.

'A good camel,' he said at last.

'He has never been underfed. He is my own and clean bred,' the driver replied.

'Go on.'

His head dropped on his chest and he tried to think, but the tenor of his thoughts was broken because he was very sleepy. In the half doze it seemed that he was learning a punishment hymn at Mrs. Jennett's. He had committed some crime as bad as Sabbath-breaking, and she had locked him up in his bedroom. But he could never repeat more than the first two lines of the hymn—

'When Israel of the Lord beloved
Out of the land of bondage came.'

He said them over and over thousands of times. The

driver turned in the saddle to see if there were any chance of capturing the revolver and ending the ride. Dick roused, struck him over the head with the butt, and stormed himself wide awake. Somebody hidden in a clump of camel-thorn shouted as the camel toiled up rising ground. A shot was fired, and the silence shut down again, bringing the desire to sleep. Dick could think no longer. He was too tired and stiff and cramped to do more than nod uneasily from time to time, waking with a start and punching the driver with the pistol.

'Is there a moon?' he asked drowsily.

'She is near her setting.'

'I wish that I could see her. Halt the camel. At least let me hear the desert talk.'

The man obeyed. Out of the utter stillness came one breath of wind. It rattled the dead leaves of a shrub some distance away and ceased. A handful of dry earth detached itself from the edge of a rain trench and crumbled softly to the bottom.

'Go on. The night is very cold.'

Those who have watched till the morning know how the last hour before the light lengthens itself into many eternities. It seemed to Dick that he had never since the beginning of original darkness done anything at all save jolt through the air. Once in a thousand years he would finger the nail-heads on the saddle-front and count them all carefully. Centuries later he would shift his revolver from his right hand to his left, and allow the eased arm to drop down at his side. From the safe distance of London he was watching himself thus employed,—watching critically. Yet whenever he put out his hand to the canvas that he might paint the tawny yellow desert under the glare of the sinking moon, the black

shadow of the camel and the two bowed figures atop, that hand held a revolver and the arm was numbed from wrist to collar-bone. Moreover, he was in the dark, and could see no canvas of any kind whatever.

The driver grunted, and Dick was conscious of a change in the air.

'I smell the dawn,' he whispered.

'It is here, and yonder are the troops. Have I done well?'

The camel stretched out its neck and roared as there came down wind the pungent reek of camels in square.

'Go on. We must get there swiftly. Go on.'

'They are moving in their camp. There is so much dust that I cannot see what they do.'

'Am I in better case? Go forward.'

They could hear the hum of voices ahead, the howling and the bubbling of the beasts and the hoarse cries of the soldiers girthing up for the day. Two or three shots were fired.

'Is that at us? Surely they can see that I am English,' Dick spoke angrily.

'Nay, it is from the desert,' the driver answered, cowering in his saddle. 'Go forward, my child! Well it is that the dawn did not uncover us an hour ago.'

The camel headed straight for the column and the shots behind multiplied. The children of the desert had arranged that most uncomfortable of surprises, a dawn attack for the English troops, and were getting their distance by snap-shots at the only moving object without the square.

'What luck! What stupendous and imperial luck!' said Dick. 'It's "just before the battle, mother." Oh, God has been most good to me! Only'—the agony of

the thought made him screw up his eyes for an instant—'Maisie . . .'

'Allahu! We are in,' said the man, as he drove into the rearguard and the camel knelt.

'Who the deuce are you? Despatches or what? What's the strength of the enemy behind that ridge? How did you get through?' asked a dozen voices. For all answer Dick took a long breath, unbuckled his belt, and shouted from the saddle at the top of a wearied and dusty voice, 'Torpenhow! Ohe, Torp! Coo-ee, Tor-pen-how.'

A bearded man raking in the ashes of a fire for a light to his pipe moved very swiftly towards that cry, as the rearguard, facing about, began to fire at the puffs of smoke from the hillocks around. Gradually the scattered white cloudlets drew out into long lines of banked white that hung heavily in the stillness of the dawn before they turned over wave-like and glided into the valleys. The soldiers in the square were coughing and swearing as their own smoke obstructed their view, and they edged forward to get beyond it. A wounded camel leaped to its feet and roared aloud, the cry ending in a bubbling grunt. Some one had cut its throat to prevent confusion. Then came the thick sob of a man receiving his death-wound from a bullet; then a yell of agony and redoubled firing.

There was no time to ask any questions.

'Get down, man! Get down behind the camel!'

'No. Put me, I pray, in the forefront of the battle.' Dick turned his face to Torpenhow and raised his hand to set his helmet straight, but, miscalculating the distance, knocked it off. Torpenhow saw that his hair was gray on the temples, and that his face was the face of an old man.

'Come down, you damned fool! Dickie, come off!'

And Dick came obediently, but as a tree falls, pitching sideways from the Bisharin's saddle at Torpenhow's feet. His luck had held to the last, even to the crowning mercy of a kindly bullet through his head.

Torpenhow knelt under the lee of the camel, with Dick's body in his arms.

THE END

'CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS'

A Story of the Grand Banks

CHAPTER I

THE weather door of the smoking-room had been left open to the North Atlantic fog, as the big liner rolled and lifted, whistling to warn the fishing-fleet.

'That Cheyne boy's the biggest nuisance aboard,' said a man in a frieze overcoat, shutting the door with a bang. 'He isn't wanted here. He's too fresh.'

A white-haired German reached for a sandwich, and grunted between bites: 'I know der breed. Ameriga is full of dot kind. I dell you you should imbort ropes' ends free under your dariff.'

'Pshaw! There isn't any real harm to him. He's more to be pitied than anything,' a man from New York drawled, as he lay at full length along the cushions under the wet skylight. 'They've dragged him around from hotel to hotel ever since he was a kid. I was talking to his mother this morning. She's a lovely lady, but she don't pretend to manage him. He's going to Europe to finish his education.'

'Education isn't begun yet.' This was a Philadelphian, curled up in a corner. 'That boy gets two hundred a month pocket-money, he told me. He isn't sixteen either.'

'Railroads, his father, aind't it?' said the German.

'Yep. That and mines and lumber and shipping.

Built one place at San Diego, the old man has; another at Los Angeles; owns half a dozen railroads, half the lumber on the Pacific slope, and lets his wife spend the money,' the Philadelphian went on lazily. 'The West don't suit her, she says. She just tracks around with the boy and her nerves, trying to find out what'll amuse him, I guess. Florida, Adirondacks, Lakewood, Hot Springs, New York, and round again. He isn't much more than a second-hand hotel clerk now. When he's finished in Europe he'll be a holy terror.'

'What's the matter with the old man attending to him personally?' said a voice from the frieze ulster.

'Old man's piling up the rocks. 'Don't want to be disturbed, I guess. He'll find out his error a few years from now. Pity, because there's a heap of good in the boy if you could get at it.'

'Mit a rope's end, mit a rope's end!' growled the German.

Once more the door banged, and a slight, slim-built boy perhaps fifteen years old, a half-smoked cigarette hanging from one corner of his mouth, leaned in over the high footway. His pasty yellow complexion did not show well on a person of his years, and his look was a mixture of irresolution, bravado, and very cheap smartness. He was dressed in a cherry-coloured blazer, knickerbockers, red stockings, and bicycle shoes, with a red flannel cap at the back of the head. After whistling between his teeth, as he eyed the company, he said in a loud, high voice: 'Say, it's thick outside. You can hear the fish-boats squawking all around us. Say, wouldn't it be great if we ran down one?'

'Shut the door, Harvey,' said the New Yorker. 'Shut the door and stay outside. You're not wanted here.'

'Who'll stop me?' he answered deliberately. 'Did you pay for my passage, Mister Martin? 'Guess I've as good right here as the next man.'

He picked up some dice from a checker-board and began throwing, right hand against left.

'Say, gen'elmen, this is deader'n mud. Can't we make a game of poker between us?'

There was no answer, and he puffed his cigarette, swung his legs, and drummed on the table with rather dirty fingers. Then he pulled out a roll of bills as if to count them.

'How's your mamma this afternoon?' a man said. 'I didn't see her at lunch.'

'In her state-room, I guess. She's 'most always sick on the ocean. I'm going to give the stewardess fifteen dollars for looking after her. I don't go down more'n I can avoid. It makes me feel mysterious to pass that butler's pantry place. Say, this is the first time I've been on the ocean.'

'Oh, don't apologise, Harvey.'

'Who's apologising? This is the first time I've crossed the ocean, gen'elmen, and, except the first day, I haven't been sick one little bit. No, sir!' He brought down his fist with a triumphant bang, wetted his finger, and went on counting the bills.

'Oh, you're a high-grade machine, with the writing in plain sight,' the Philadelphian yawned. 'You'll blossom into a credit to your country if you don't take care.'

'I know it. I'm an American—first, last, and all the time. I'll show 'em that when I strike Europe. Pff! My cig's out. I can't smoke the truck the steward sells. Any gen'elman got a real Turkish cig on him?'

The chief engineer entered for a moment, red, smiling,

and wet. 'Say, Mac,' cried Harvey cheerfully, 'how are we hitting it?'

'Vara much in the ordinary way,' was the grave reply. 'The young are as polite as ever to their elders, an' their elders are e'en tryin' to appreciate it.'

A low chuckle came from a corner. The German opened his cigar-case and handed a skinny black cigar to Harvey.

'Dot is der broper apparatus to smoke, my young friendt,' he said. 'You vill dry it? Yes? Den you vill be efer so happy.'

Harvey lit the unlovely thing with a flourish: he felt that he was getting on in grown-up society.

'It would take more'n this to keel me over,' he said, ignorant that he was lighting that terrible article, a 'Wheeling stogie.'

'Dot we shall bresently see,' said the German. 'Where are we now, Mr. Mactonal'?'

'Just there or thereabouts, Mr. Schaefer,' said the engineer. 'We'll be on the Grand Bank to-night; but in a general way o' speakin', we're all among the fishing-fleet now. We've shaved three dories an' near skelped the boom off a Frenchman since noon, an' that's close sailin', ye may say.'

'You like my cigar, eh?' the German asked, for Harvey's eyes were full of tears.

'Fine, full flavour,' he answered through shut teeth. 'Guess we've slowed down a little, haven't we? I'll skip out and see what the log says.'

'I might if I vhas you,' said the German.

Harvey staggered over the wet decks to the nearest rail. He was very unhappy; but he saw the deck-steward lashing chairs together, and since he had boasted

before the man that he was never sea-sick, his pride made him go aft to the second-saloon deck at the stern which was finished in a turtle-back. The deck was deserted, and he crawled to the extreme end of it near the flag-pole. There he doubled up in limp agony, for the 'Wheeling stogie' joined with the surge and jar of the screw to sieve out his soul. His head swelled; sparks of fire danced before his eyes; his body seemed to lose weight, while his heels wavered in the breeze. He was fainting from sea-sickness, and a roll of the ship tilted him over the rail on to the smooth lip of the turtle-back. Then a low, gray mother-wave swung out of the fog, tucked Harvey under one arm, so to speak, and pulled him off and away to leeward; the great green closed over him, and he went quietly to sleep.

He was roused by the sound of a dinner-horn such as they used to blow at a summer-school he had once attended in the Adirondacks. Slowly he remembered that he was Harvey Cheyne, drowned and dead in mid-ocean, but was too weak to fit things together. A new smell filled his nostrils; wet and clammy chills ran down his back, and he was helplessly full of salt water. When he opened his eyes, he perceived that he was still on the top of the sea, for it was running round him in silver-coloured hills, and he was lying on a pile of half-dead fish, looking at a broad human back clothed in a blue jersey.

'It's no good,' thought the boy. 'I'm dead, sure enough, and this Thing is in charge.'

He groaned, and the figure turned its head, showing a pair of little gold rings half hidden in curly black hair.

'Aha! You feel some pretty well now?' it said. 'Lie still so; we trim better.'

With a swift jerk he sculled the flickering boat head-on to a foamless sea that lifted her twenty full feet only to slide her into a glassy pit beyond. But this mountain-climbing did not interrupt blue-jersey's talk. 'Fine good job, I say, that I catch you. Eh, wha-at? Better good job, I say, your boat not catch me. How you come to fall out?'

'I was sick,' said Harvey; 'sick, and couldn't help it.'

'Just in time I blow my horn, and your boat she yaw a little. Then I see you come all down. Eh, wha-at? I think you are cut into baits by the screw, but you dreeft—dreeft to me, and I make a big fish of you. So you shall not die this time.'

'Where am I?' said Harvey, who could not see that life was particularly safe where he lay.

'You are with me in the dory—Manuel my name, and I come from schooner "We're Here" of Gloucester. I live to Gloucester. By and by we get supper. Eh, wha-at?'

He seemed to have two pairs of hands and a head of cast-iron, for, not content with blowing through a big conch-shell, he must needs stand up to it, swaying with the sway of the flat-bottomed dory, and send a grinding, thuttering shriek through the fog. How long this entertainment lasted, Harvey could not remember, for he lay back terrified at the sight of the smoking swells. He fancied he heard a gun and a horn and shouting. Something bigger than the dory, but quite as lively, loomed alongside. Several voices talked at once; he was dropped into a dark, heaving hole, where men in oilskins gave him a hot drink, and took off his clothes, and he fell asleep.

When he waked he listened for the first breakfast-

bell on the steamer, wondering why his state-room had grown so small. Turning, he looked into a narrow, triangular cave, lit by a lamp hung against a huge square beam. A three-cornered table within arm's reach ran from the angle of the bows to the foremast. At the after end, behind a well-used Plymouth stove, sat a boy about his own age, with a flat, red face and a pair of twinkling gray eyes. He was dressed in a blue jersey and high rubber boots. Several pairs of the same sort of foot-wear, an old cap, and some worn-out woollen socks lay on the floor, and black and yellow oilskins swayed to and fro beside the bunks. The place was packed as full of smells as a bale is of cotton. The oilskins had a peculiarly thick flavour of their own which made a sort of background to the smells of fried fish, burnt grease, paint, pepper, and stale tobacco; but these, again, were all hooped together by one encircling smell of ship and salt water. Harvey saw with disgust that there were no sheets on his bed-place. He was lying on a piece of dingy ticking full of lumps and nubbles. Then, too, the boat's motion was not that of a steamer. She was neither sliding nor rolling, but rather wriggling herself about in a silly, aimless way, like a colt at the end of a halter. Water-noises ran by close to his ear, and beams creaked and whined about him. All these things made him grunt despairingly and think of his mother.

'Feelin' better?' said the boy, with a grin. 'Hev some coffee?' He brought a tin cup full and sweetened it with molasses.

'Isn't there milk?' said Harvey, looking round the dark double tier of bunks as if he expected to find a cow there.

'Well, no,' said the boy. 'Ner there ain't likely to be till 'baout mid-September. 'Tain't bad coffee. I made it.'

Harvey drank in silence, and the boy handed him a plate full of pieces of crisp fried pork, which he ate ravenously.

'I've dried your clothes. Guess they've shrunk some,' said the boy. 'They ain't our style much—none of 'em. Twist round an' see ef you're hurt any.'

Harvey stretched himself in every direction, but could not report any injuries.

'That's good,' the boy said heartily. 'Fix yerself an' go on deck. Dad wants to see you. I'm his son—Dan, they call me—an' I'm cook's helper an' everything else aboard that's too dirty for the men. There ain't no boy here 'cep' me sence Otto went overboard—an' he was only a Dutchy, an' twenty year old at that. How d'you come to fall off in a dead flat ca'am?'

''Twasn't a calm,' said Harvey sulkily. 'It was a gale, and I was sea-sick. Guess I must have rolled over the rail.'

'There was a little common swell yes'day an' last night,' said the boy. 'But ef thet's your notion of a gale—' He whistled. 'You'll know more 'fore you're through. Hurry! Dad's waitin'.'

Like many other unfortunate young people, Harvey had never in all his life received a direct order—never, at least, without long, and sometimes tearful, explanations of the advantages of obedience and the reasons for the request. Mrs. Cheyne lived in fear of breaking his spirit, which, perhaps, was the reason that she herself walked on the edge of nervous prostration. He could not see why he should be expected to hurry for any

man's pleasure, and said so. 'Your dad can come down here if he's so anxious to talk to me. I want him to take me to New York right away. It'll pay him.'

Dan opened his eyes, as the size and beauty of this joke dawned on him. 'Say, dad,' he shouted up the foc'sle hatch, 'he says you kin slip down an' see him ef you're anxious that way. Hear, dad?'

The answer came back in the deepest voice Harvey had ever heard from a human chest: 'Quit foolin', Dan, and send him to me.'

Dan sniggered, and threw Harvey his warped bicycle shoes. There was something in the tones on the deck that made the boy dissemble his extreme rage and console himself with the thought of gradually unfolding the tale of his own and his father's wealth on the voyage home. This rescue would certainly make him a hero among his friends for life. He hoisted himself on deck up a perpendicular ladder, and stumbled aft, over a score of obstructions, to where a small, thick-set, clean-shaven man with gray eyebrows sat on a step that led up to the quarter-deck. The swell had passed in the night, leaving a long, oily sea, dotted round the horizon with the sails of a dozen fishing-boats. Between them lay little black specks, showing where the dories were out fishing. The schooner, with a triangular riding-sail on the mainmast, played easily at anchor, and except for the man by the cabin roof—'house,' they call it—she was deserted.

'Mornin'—good afternoon, I should say. You've nigh slep' the clock around, young feller,' was the greeting.

'Mornin',' said Harvey. He did not like being called 'young feller'; and, as one rescued from drowning,

expected sympathy. His mother suffered agonies whenever he got his feet wet, but this mariner did not seem excited.

'Naow let's hear all abaout it. It's quite providential, first an' last, fer all concerned. What might be your name? Where from (we mistrust it's Noo York), an' where baound (we mistrust it's Europe)?'

Harvey gave his name, the name of the steamer, and a short history of the accident, winding up with a demand to be taken back immediately to New York, where his father would pay anything any one chose to name.

'H'm,' said the shaven man, quite unmoved by the end of Harvey's speech. 'I can't say we think special of any man, or boy even, that falls overboard from that kind o' packet in a flat ca'am. Least of all when his excuse is thet he's sea-sick.'

'Excuse!' cried Harvey. 'D'you suppose I'd fall overboard into your dirty little boat for fun?'

'Not knowin' what your notions o' fun may be, I can't rightly say, young feller. But if I was you, I wouldn't call the boat which, under Providence, was the means o' savin' ye, names. In the first place, it's blame irreligious. In the second, it's annoyin' to my feelin's—an' I'm Disko Troop o' the "We're Here" o' Gloucester, which you don't seem rightly to know.'

'I don't know and I don't care,' said Harvey. 'I'm grateful enough for being saved and all that of course; but I want you to understand that the sooner you take me back to New York the better it'll pay you.'

'Meanin'—haow?' Troop raised one shaggy eyebrow over a suspiciously mild blue eye.

'Dollars and cents,' said Harvey, delighted to think

that he was making an impression. 'Cold dollars and cents.' He thrust a hand into a pocket, and threw out his stomach a little, which was his way of being grand. 'You've done the best day's work you ever did in your life when you pulled me in. I'm all the son Harvey Cheyne has.'

'He's bin favoured,' said Disko drily.

'And if you don't know who Harvey Cheyne is, you don't know much—that's all. Now turn her around and let's hurry.'

Harvey had a notion that the greater part of America was filled with people discussing and envying his father's dollars.

'Mebbe I do, an' mebbe I don't. Take a reef in your stummick, young feller. It's full o' my vittles.'

Harvey heard a chuckle from Dan, who was pretending to be busy by the stump-foremast, and the blood rushed to his face.

'We'll pay for that too,' he said. 'When do you suppose we shall get to New York?'

'I don't use Noo York any. Ner Boston. We may see Eastern Point abaout September, an' your pa—I'm real sorry I hain't heerd tell of him—may give me ten dollars efter all your talk. Then o' course he mayn't.'

'Ten dollars! Why, see here, I—' Harvey dived into his pocket for the wad of bills. All he brought up was a soggy packet of cigarettes.

'Not lawful currency, an' bad for the lungs. Heave 'em overboard, young feller, an' try agin.'

'It's been stole!' cried Harvey hotly.

'You'll hev to wait till you see your pa, to reward me, then?'

'A hundred and thirty-four dollars—all stolen,' said

Harvey, hunting wildly through his pockets. 'Give them back.'

A curious change flitted across old Troop's hard face. 'What might you have been doin' at your time o' life with one hundred an' thirty-four dollars, young feller?'

'It was part of my pocket-money—for a month.' This Harvey thought would be a knock-down blow, and it was—indirectly.

'Oh! One hundred and thirty-four dollars is only part of his pocket-money—for one month only! You don't remember hittin' anything when you fell over, do you? Crack agin a stanchion, le's say? Old man Hasken o' the "East Wind" '—Troop seemed to be talking to himself—'he tripped on a hatch an' butted the mainmast with his head—hardish. 'Baout three weeks afterwards, old man Hasken he would hev it that the "East Wind" was a commerce-destroyin' man-o'-war, an' so he declared war on Sable Island because it was Bridish, an' the shoals run aout too far. They sewed him up in a bed-bag, his head an' feet appearin', fer the rest o' the trip, an' now he's to home in Essex playin' with little rag dolls.'

Harvey choked with rage, but Troop went on consolingly: 'We're sorry fer you. We're very sorry fer you —an' so young. We won't say no more abaout the money, I guess.'

' 'Course you won't. You stole it.'

'Suit yourself. We stole it ef it's any comfort to you. Naow, abaout goin' back. Allowin' we could do it, which we can't, you ain't in no fit state to go back to your home, an' we've jest come on to the Banks workin' fer our bread. We don't see the ha'af of a hundred dollars a month, let alone pocket-money; an' with good

luck we'll be ashore again somewheres abaout the first weeks o' September.'

'But—but it's May now, and I can't stay here doin' nothing just because you want to fish. I can't, I tell you!'

'Right an' jest; jest an' right. No one asks you to do nothin'. There's a heap as you can do, for Otto he went overboard on Le Have. I mistrust he lost his grip in a gale we f'und there. Anyways he never come back to deny it. You've turned up, plain, plumb providential for all concerned. I mistrust, though, there's ruther few things you kin do. Ain't thet so?'

'I can make it lively for you and your crowd when we get ashore,' said Harvey, with a vicious nod, murmuring vague threats about 'piracy,' at which Troop almost—not quite—smiled.

'Excep' talk. I'd forgot that. You ain't asked to talk more'n you've a mind to aboard the "We're Here." Keep your eyes open, an' help Dan to do ez he's bid, an' sechlike, an' I'll give you—you ain't wuth it, but I'll give you—ten and a ha'af a month; say thirty-five at the end o' the trip. A little work will ease up your head, an' you kin tell us all abaout your dad an' your ma an' your money efterwards.'

'She's on the steamer,' said Harvey, his eyes filling with tears. 'Take me to New York at once.'

'Poor woman—poor woman! When she has you back she'll forgit it all, though. There's eight of us on the "We're Here," an' ef we went back naow—it's more'n a thousand mile—we'd lose the season. The men they wouldn't hev it—even allowin' I was agreeable.'

'But my father would make it all right.'

'He'd try. I don't doubt he'd try,' said Troop, 'but a whole season's catch is eight men's bread; an' you'll be better in your health when you see him in the fall. Go forward an' help Dan. It's ten an' a ha'af a month, ez I said, an', o' course, all f'und, same ez the rest o' us.'

'Do you mean I'm to clean pots and pans and things?' said Harvey.

'An' other things. You've no call to shout, young feller.'

'I won't! My father will give you enough to buy this dirty little fish-kettle'—Harvey stamped on the deck—'ten times over, if you take me to New York safe; and—and—you're ahead a hundred and thirty dollars by me, anyway.'

'Ha-ow?' said Troop, the iron face darkening.

'How? You know how, well enough. On top of all that, you want me to do menial work'—Harvey was very proud of that adjective—'till the fall. I tell you I will not. You hear?'

Troop regarded the top of the mainmast with deep interest for a while, as Harvey harangued fiercely all around him.

'Hsh!' he said at last. 'I'm figurin' out my responsibilities in my own mind. It's a matter o' jedgment.'

Dan stole up and plucked Harvey by the elbow. 'Don't go to tamperin' with dad any more,' he pleaded. 'You've called him a thief two or three times over, an' he don't take that from any livin' bein'.'

'I won't!' Harvey almost shrieked, disregarding the advice, and still Troop meditated.

'Seems kinder unneighbourly,' he said at last, his eye travelling down to Harvey. 'I don't blame you, not a mite, young feller, nor you won't blame me when the

bile's out o' your systim. Be sure you sense what I say? Ten an' a ha'af fer second boy on the schooner—an' all f'und—fer to teach you an' fer the sake o' your health. Yes or no?'

'No!' said Harvey. 'Take me back to New York or I'll see you—'

He did not exactly remember what followed. He was lying in the scuppers, holding on to a nose that bled, while Troop looked down on him serenely.

'Dan,' he said to his son, 'I was sot agin this young feller when I first saw him, on account o' hasty jedgments. Never you be led astray by hasty jedgments, Dan. Naow I'm sorry for him, because he's clear distracted in his upper works. He ain't responsible fer the names he's give me, nor fer his other statements—nor fer jumpin' overboard, which I'm abaout ha'af convinced he did. You be gentle with him, Dan, 'r I'll give you twice what I've give him. Them hemmeridges clears the head. Let him sluice it off!'

Troop went down solemnly into the cabin, where he and the older men bunked, leaving Dan to comfort the luckless heir to thirty millions.

CHAPTER II

'I WARNED ye', said Dan, as the drops fell thick and fast on the dark, oiled planking. 'Dad ain't noways hasty, but you fair earned it. Pshaw! there's no sense takin' on so.' Harvey's shoulders were rising and falling in spasms of dry sobbing. 'I know the feelin'. First time dad laid me out was the last—and that was my first trip. Makes ye feel sickish an' lonesome. I know.'

'It does,' moaned Harvey. 'That man's either crazy or drunk, and—and I can't do anything.'

'Don't say that to dad,' whispered Dan. 'He's set agin all liquor, an'—well, he told me you was the madman. What in creation made you call him a thief? He's my dad.'

Harvey sat up, mopped his nose, and told the story of the missing wad of bills. 'I'm not crazy,' he wound up. 'Only—your father has never seen more than a five-dollar bill at a time, and my father could buy up this boat once a week and never miss it.'

'You don't know what the "We're Here" 's worth. Your dad must hev a pile o' money. How did he git it? Dad sez loonies can't shake out a straight yarn. Go ahead.'

'In gold mines and things, West.'

'I've read o' that kind o' business. Out West, too?

Does he go around with a pistol on a trick-pony, same ez the circus. They call that the Wild West, and I've heard that their spurs an' bridles was solid silver.'

'You are a chump!' said Harvey, amused in spite of himself. 'My father hasn't any use for ponies. When he wants to ride he takes his car.'

'Haow? Lobster-car?'

'No. His own private car, of course. You've seen a private car some time in your life?'

'Slatin Beeman he hez one,' said Dan cautiously. 'I saw her at the Union Depot in Boston, with three niggers hoggin' her run.' (Dan meant cleaning the windows.) 'But Slatin Beeman he owns 'baout every railroad on Long Island, they say; an' they say he's bought 'baout ha'af Noo Hampshire an' run a line-fence around her, an' filled her up with lions an' tigers an' bears an' buffalo an' crocodiles an' such all. Slatin Beeman he's a millionaire. I've seen his car. Yes?'

'Well, my father's what they call a multi-millionaire; and he has two private cars. One's named for me, the "Harvey," and one for my mother, the "Constance." '

'Hold on,' said Dan. 'Dad don't ever let me swear, but I guess you can. 'Fore we go ahead, I want you to say hope you may die if you're lying.'

'Of course,' said Harvey.

'Thet ain't 'nuff. Say, "Hope I may die if I ain't speakin' truth." '

'Hope I may die right here,' said Harvey, 'if every word I've spoken isn't the cold truth.'

'Hundred an' thirty-four dollars an' all?' said Dan. 'I heard ye talkin' to dad, an' I ha'af looked you'd be swallered up, same's Jonah.'

Harvey protested himself red in the face. Dan was a

shrewd young person along his own lines, and ten minutes' questioning convinced him that Harvey was not lying—much. Besides, he had bound himself by the most terrible oath known to boyhood, and yet he sat, alive, with a red-ended nose, in the scuppers, recounting marvels upon marvels.

'Gosh!' said Dan at last from the very bottom of his soul when Harvey had completed an inventory of the car named in his honour. Then a grin of mischievous delight overspread his broad face. 'I believe you, Harvey. Dad's made a mistake fer once in his life.'

'He has, sure,' said Harvey, who was meditating an early revenge.

'He'll be mad clear through. Dad jest hates to be mistook in his jedgments.' Dan lay back and slapped his thigh. 'Oh, Harvey, don't you spile the catch by lettin' on.'

'I don't want to be knocked down again. I'll get even with him, though.'

'Never heard any man ever got even with dad. But he'd knock ye down again sure. The more he was mistook the more he'd do it. But, gold mines and pistols—'

'I never said a word about pistols,' Harvey cut in, for he was on his oath.

'Thet's so; no more you did. Two private cars, then, one named fer you an' one fer her; an' two hundred dollars a month pocket-money, all knocked into the scuppers fer not workin' fer ten an' a ha'af a month! It's the top haul o' the season.' He exploded with noiseless chuckles.

'Then I was right?' said Harvey, who thought he had found a sympathiser.

'You was wrong; the wrongest kind o' wrong! You

take right hold an' pitch in 'longside o' me, or you'll catch it, an' I'll catch it fer backin' you up. Dad always gives me double helps 'cause I'm his son, an' he hates favourin' folk. Guess you're kinder mad at dad. I've been that way time an' again. But dad's a mighty jest man; all the fleet says so.'

'Looks like justice, this, don't it?' Harvey pointed to his outraged nose.

'Thet's nothin'. Lets the shore blood outer you. Dad did it for yer health. Say, though, I can't have dealin's with a man that thinks me or dad or any one on the "We're Here" 's a thief. We ain't any common wharf-end crowd by any manner o' means. We're fishermen, an' we've shipped together for six years an' more. Don't you make any mistake on that! I told ye dad don't let me swear. He calls 'em vain oaths, and pounds me; but ef I could say what you said 'baout your pap an' his fixin's, I'd say that 'baout your dollars. I dunno what was in your pockets when I dried your kit, fer I didn't look to see; but I'd say, using the very same words ez you used jest now, neither me nor dad—an' we was the only two that teched you after you was brought aboard—knows anythin' 'baout the money. Thet's my say. Naow?'

The blood-letting had certainly cleared Harvey's brain, and may be the loneliness of the sea had something to do with it. 'That's all right,' he said. Then he looked down confusedly. 'Seems to me, that for a fellow just saved from drowning I haven't been over and above grateful, Dan.'

'Well, you was shook up and silly,' said Dan. 'Anyway, there was only dad an' me aboard to see it. The cook he don't count.'

'I might have thought about losing the bills that way,' Harvey said half to himself, 'instead of calling everybody in sight a thief. Where's your father?'

'In the cabin. What d'you want o' him again?'

'You'll see,' said Harvey, and he stepped, rather groggily, for his head was still singing, to the cabin steps, where the little ship's clock hung in plain sight of the wheel. Troop in the chocolate-and-yellow-painted cabin was busy with a note-book and an enormous black pencil, which he sucked hard from time to time.

'I haven't acted quite right,' said Harvey, surprised at his own meekness.

'What's wrong naow?' said the skipper. 'Walked into Dan, hev ye?'

'No; it's about you.'

'I'm here to listen.'

'Well I—I'm here to take things back,' said Harvey, very quickly. 'When a man's saved from drowning—' he gulped.

'Ey? You'll make a man yet ef you go on this way.'

'He oughtn't begin by calling people names.'

'Jest an' right—right an' jest,' said Troop, with the ghost of a dry smile.

'So I'm here to say I'm sorry.' Another big gulp.

Troop heaved himself slowly off the locker he was sitting on and held out an eleven-inch hand. 'I mistrusted 'twould do you sights o' good; an' this shows I weren't mistook in my jedgments.' A smothered chuckle on deck caught his ear. 'I am very seldom mistook in my jedgments.' The eleven-inch hand closed on Harvey's, numbing it to the elbow. 'We'll put a little more gristle to that 'fore we've done with you, young feller; an' I don't think any worse of ye fer

anythin' thet's gone by. You wasn't fairly responsible. Go right abaout your business an' you won't take no hurt.'

'You're white,' said Dan, as Harvey regained the deck.

'I don't feel it,' said he, flushed to the tips of his ears.

'I didn't mean that way. I heard what dad said. When dad allows he don't think the worse of any man, dad's give himself away. He hates to be mistook in his jedgments too. Ho! ho! Onct dad has a jedgment, he'd sooner dip his colours to the British than change it. I'm glad it's settled right eend up. Dad's right when he says he can't take you back. It's all the livin' we make here—fishin'. The men'll be back like sharks after a dead whale in ha'af an hour.'

'What for?' said Harvey.

'Supper, o' course. Don't your stummick tell you? You've a heap to learn.'

'Guess I have,' said Harvey dolefully, looking at the tangle of ropes and blocks overhead.

'She's a daisy,' said Dan enthusiastically, misunderstanding the look. 'Wait till our mainsail's bent, an' she walks home with all her salt wet. There's some work first, though.' He pointed down into the darkness of the open main-hatch between the two masts.

'What's that for? It's all empty,' said Harvey.

'You an' me an' a few more hev got to fill it,' said Dan. 'That's where the fish goes.'

'Alive?' said Harvey.

'Well, no. They're so's to be ruther dead—an' flat—an' salt. There's a hundred hogshead o' salt in the bins; an' we hain't more'n covered our dunnage to now.'

'Where are the fish, though?'

'In the sea they say; in the boats we pray,' said Dan, quoting a fisherman's proverb. 'You come in last night with 'baout forty of 'em.'

He pointed to a sort of wooden pen just in front of the quarter-deck.

'You an' me we'll sluice that out when they're through. 'Send we'll hev full pens to-night! I've seen her down ha'af a foot with fish waitin' to clean, an' we stood to the tables till we was splittin' ourselves instid o' them, we was so sleepy. Yes, they're comin' in naow.' Dan looked over the low bulwarks at half a dozen dories rowing toward them over the shining, silky sea.

'I've never seen the sea from so low down,' said Harvey. 'It's fine.'

The low sun made the water all purple and pinkish, with golden lights on the barrels of the long swells, and blue and green mackerel shades in the hollows. Each schooner in sight seemed to be pulling her dories towards her by invisible strings, and the little black figures in the tiny boats pulled like clockwork toys.

'They've struck on good,' said Dan, between his half-shut eyes. 'Manuel hain't room fer another fish. Low ez a lily-pad in still water, ain't he?'

'Which is Manuel? I don't see how you can tell 'em 'way off, as you do.'

'Last boat to the south'ard. He f'und you last night,' said Dan, pointing. 'Manuel rows Portugoosey; ye can't mistake him. East o' him—he's a heap better'n he rows—is Pennsylvania. Loaded with saleratus, by the looks of him. East o' him—see how pretty they string out all along—with the humpy shoulders, is Long Jack. He's a Galway man inhabitin' South Boston, where they all live mostly, an' mostly them

Galway men are good in a boat. North, away yonder —you'll hear him tune up in a minute—is Tom Platt. Man-o'-war's man he was on the old "Ohio"—first of our navy, he says, to go araound the Horn. He never talks of much else, 'cept when he sings, but he has fair fishin' luck. There! What did I tell you?'

A melodious bellow stole across the water from the northern dory. Harvey heard something about somebody's hands and feet being cold, and then:—

'Bring forth the chart, the doleful chart,
See where them mountings meet!
The clouds are thick around their heads,
The mists around their feet.'

'Full boat,' said Dan with a chuckle. 'If he gives us "O Captain" it's toppin' full.'

The bellow continued:—

'And naow to thee, O Capting,
Most earnestly I pray,
That they shall never bury me
In church or cloister gray.'

'Double game for Tom Platt. He'll tell you all about the old "Ohio" to-morrow. See that blue dory behind him? He's my uncle—dad's own brother—an' ef there's any bad luck loose on the Banks she'll fetch up agin Uncle Salters, sure. Look how tender he's rowin'. I'll lay my wage and share he's the only man stung up to-day—an' he's stung up good.'

'What'll sting him?' said Harvey, getting interested.

'Strawberries, mostly. Punkins, sometimes, an' sometimes lemons an' cucumbers. Yes, he's stung up from

his elbows down. That man's luck's perfectly paralysin'. Naow we'll take a-holt o' the tackles an' hist 'em in. Is it true what you told me jest now, that you never done a hand's turn o' work in all your born life? Must feel kinder awful, don't it?'

'I'm going to try to work anyway,' Harvey replied stoutly. 'Only it's all dead new.'

'Lay a-holt o' that tackle, then. Behind ye!'

Harvey grabbed at a rope and long iron hook dangling from one of the stays of the mainmast, while Dan pulled down another that ran from something he called a 'topping lift,' as Manuel drew alongside in his loaded dory. The Portuguese smiled a brilliant smile that Harvey learned to know well later, and with a short-handled fork began to throw fish into the pen on deck. 'Two hundred and thirty-one,' he shouted.

'Give him the hook,' said Dan, and Harvey ran it into Manuel's hands. He slipped it through a loop of rope at the dory's bow, caught Dan's tackle, hooked it to the stern-becket, and clambered into the schooner.

'Pull!' shouted Dan, and Harvey pulled, astonished to find how easily the dory rose.

'Hold on, she don't nest in the cross-trees!' Dan laughed; and Harvey held on, for the boat lay in the air above his head.

'Lower away,' Dan shouted, and as Harvey lowered, Dan swayed the light boat with one hand till it landed softly just behind the mainmast. 'They don't weigh nothin' empty. Thet was right smart fer a passenger. There's more trick to it in a sea-way.'

'Ah ha!' said Manuel, holding out a brown hand. 'You are some pretty well now? This time last night the fish they fish for you. Now you fish for fish. Eh, wha-at?'

'I'm—I'm ever so grateful,' Harvey stammered, and his unfortunate hand stole to his pocket once more, but he remembered that he had no money to offer. When he knew Manuel better the mere thought of the mistake he might have made would cover him with hot, uneasy blushes in his bunk.

'There is no to be thankful for to me!' said Manuel. 'How shall I leave you dreeft, dreeft all around the Banks? Now you are a fisherman—eh, wha-at? Ouh! Auh!' He bent backward and forward stiffly from the hips to get the kinks out of himself.

'I have not cleaned boat to-day. Too busy. They struck on queek. Danny, my son, clean for me.'

Harvey moved forward at once. Here was something he could do for the man who had saved his life.

Dan threw him a swab, and he leaned over the dory, mopping up the slime, clumsily, but with great goodwill. 'Hike out the footboards; they slide in them grooves,' said Dan. 'Swab 'em an' lay 'em down. Never let a footboard jam. Ye may want her bad some day. Here's Long Jack.'

A stream of glittering fish flew into the pen from a dory alongside.

'Manuel, you take the tackle. I'll fix the tables. Harvey, clear Manuel's boat. Long Jack's nestin' on the top of her.'

Harvey looked up from his swabbing at the bottom of another dory just above his head.

'Jest like the Injian puzzle-boxes, ain't they?' said Dan, as the one boat dropped into the other.

'Takes to ut like a duck to water,' said Long Jack, a grizzly-chinned, long-lipped Galway man, bending to and fro exactly as Manuel had done. Disko in the

cabin growled up the hatchway, and they could hear him suck his pencil.

'Wan hunder an' forty-nine an' a half—bad luck to ye, Discobolus!' said Long Jack. 'I'm murderin' meself to fill your pockuts. Slate ut for a bad catch. The Portugee has bate me.'

Whack came another dory alongside, and more fish shot into the pen.

'Two hundred and three. Let's look at the passenger!' The speaker was even larger than the Galway man, and his face was made curious by a purple cut running slantways from his left eye to the right corner of his mouth.

Not knowing what else to do, Harvey swabbed each dory as it came down, pulled out the footboards, and laid them in the bottom of the boat.

'He's caught on good,' said the scarred man, who was Tom Platt, watching him critically. 'There are two ways o' doin' everything. One's fisher-fashion—any end first an' a slippery hitch over all—an' the other's—'

'What we did on the old "Ohio"!' Dan interrupted, brushing into the knot of men with a long board on legs. 'Git out o' here, Tom Platt, an' leave me fix the tables.'

He jammed one end of the board into two nicks in the bulwarks, kicked out the leg, and ducked just in time to avoid a swinging blow from the man-o'-war's man.

'An' they did that on the "Ohio," too, Danny. See?' said Tom Platt, laughing.

'Guess they was swivel-eyed, then, fer it didn't git home, and I know who'll find his boots on the main-truck ef he don't leave us alone. Haul ahead! I'm busy, can't ye see?'

'Danny, ye lie on the cable an' sleep all day,' said Long Jack. 'You're the hoight av impidence, an' I'm persuaded ye'll corrupt our supercargo in a week.'

'His name's Harvey,' said Dan, waving two strangely-shaped knives, 'an' he'll be worth five of any Sou' Boston clam-digger 'fore long.' He laid the knives tastefully on the table, cocked his head on one side, and admired the effect.

'I think it's forty-two,' said a small voice over-side, and there was a roar of laughter as another voice answered, 'Then my luck's turned fer onct, 'caze I'm forty-five, though I be stung outer all shape.'

'Forty-two or forty-five. I've lost count,' the small voice said.

'It's Penn an' Uncle Salters caountin' catch. This beats the circus any day,' said Dan. 'Jest look at 'em!'

'Come in—come in!' roared Long Jack. 'It's wet out yondher, children.'

'Forty-two, ye said.' This was Uncle Salters.

'I'll count again, then,' the voice replied meekly.

The two dories swung together and bunted into the schooner's side.

'Patience o' Jerusalem!' snapped Uncle Salters, backing water with a splash. 'What possest a farmer like you to set foot in a boat beats me. You've nigh stove me all up.'

'I am sorry, Mr. Salters. I came to sea on account of nervous dyspepsia. You advised me, I think.'

'You an' your nervis dyspepsy be drowned in the Whale-hole,' roared Uncle Salters, a fat and tubby little man. 'You're comin' down on me agin. Did ye say forty-two or forty-five?'

'I've forgotten, Mr. Salters. Let's count.'

'Don't see as it could be forty-five. I'm forty-five, said Uncle Salters. 'You count keerful, Penn.'

Disko Troop came out of the cabin. 'Salters, you pitch your fish in naow at once,' he said in the tone of authority.

'Don't spile the catch, dad,' Dan murmured. 'Them two are on'y jest beginnin'.'

'Mother av delight! He's forkin' them wan by wan,' howled Long Jack, as Uncle Salters got to work laboriously; the little man in the other dory counting a line of notches on the gunwale.

'That was last week's catch,' he said, looking up plaintively, his forefinger where he had left off.

Manuel nudged Dan, who darted to the aftertackle, and, leaning far over-side, slipped the hook into the stern rope as Manuel made her fast forward. The others pulled gallantly and swung the boat in—man, fish, and all.

'One, two, four—nine,' said Tom Platt, counting with a practised eye. 'Forty-seven. Penn, you're it!' Dan let the aftertackle run and slid him out of the stern on to the deck amid a torrent of his own fish.

'Hold on!' roared Uncle Salters, bobbing by the waist. 'Hold on, I'm a bit mixed in my caount.'

He had no time to protest, but was hove inboard and treated like 'Pennsylvania.'

'Forty-one,' said Tom Platt. 'Beat by a farmer, Salters. An' you sech a sailor, too!'

' 'Twern't fair caount,' said he, stumbling out of the pen; 'an' I'm stung up all to pieces.'

His thick hands were puffy and mottled purply white.

'Some folks will find strawberry-bottom,' said Dan, addressing the newly-risen moon, 'ef they hev to dive fer it, seems to me.'

'An' others,' said Uncle Salters, 'eats the fat o' the land in sloth, an' mocks their own blood-kin.'

'Seat ye! seat ye!' a voice Harvey had not heard called from the foc'sle. Disko Troop, Tom Platt, Long Jack, and Salters went forward on the word. Little Penn bent above his square deep-sea reel, and the tangled cod-lines. Manuel lay down full length on the deck, and Dan dropped into the hold, where Harvey heard him banging casks with a hammer.

'Salt,' he said, returning. 'Soon as we're through supper we git to dressing-down. You'll pitch to dad. Tom Platt an' dad they stow together, an' you'll hear 'em arguin'. We're second ha'af, you an' me an' Manuel an' Penn—the youth an' beauty o' the boat.'

'What's the good of that?' said Harvey. 'I'm hungry.'

'They'll be through in a minute. Snff! She smells good to-night. Dad ships a good cook ef he do suffer with his brother. It's a full catch to-day, ain't it?' He pointed at the pens piled high with cod. 'What water did ye hev, Manuel?'

'Twenty-fife father,' said the Portuguese sleepily. 'They strike on good an' queek. Some day I show you, Harvey.'

The moon was beginning to walk on the still sea before the elder men came aft. The cook had no need to cry 'second half.' Dan and Manuel were down the hatch and at table ere Tom Platt, last and most deliberate of the elders, had finished wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. Harvey followed Penn, and sat down before a tin pan of cods' tongues and sounds, mixed with scraps of pork and fried potato, a loaf of hot bread, and some black and powerful coffee. Hungry as they were,

they waited while 'Pennsylvania' solemnly asked a blessing. Then they stoked in silence till Dan drew breath over his tin cup and demanded of Harvey how he felt.

'Most full, but there's just room for another piece.'

The cook was a huge jet-black negro, and, unlike all the negroes Harvey had met, did not talk, contenting himself with smiles and dumb-show invitations to eat more.

'See, Harvey,' said Dan, rapping with his fork on the table, 'it's jest as I said. The young an' handsome men—like me an' Pennsy an' you an' Manuel—we're second ha'af, an' we eats when the first ha'af are through. They're the old fish; and they're mean an' humpy, an' their stummicks has to be humoured; so they come first, which they don't deserve. Ain't that so, doctor?'

The cook nodded.

'Can't he talk?' said Harvey in a whisper.

''Nough to git along. Not much o' anything we know. His natural tongue's kinder curious. Comes from the innards of Cape Breton, he does, where the farmers speak home-made Scotch. Cape Breton's full o' niggers whose folk run in there durin' aour war, an' they talk like the farmers—all huffy-chuffy.'

'That is not Scotch,' said 'Pennsylvania.' 'That is Gaelic. So I read in a book.'

'Penn reads a heap. Most of what he says is so—'cep' when it comes to a caount o' fish—eh?'

'Does your father just let them say how many they've caught without checking them?' said Harvey.

'Why, yes. Where's the sense of a man lyin' fer a few old cod?'

'Was a man once lied for his catch,' Manuel put in.

'Lied every day. Fife, ten, twenty-fife more fish than come he say there was.'

'Where was that?' said Dan. 'None o' aour folk?'

'Frenchman of Anguille.'

'Ah! Them West Shore Frenchmen don't caount anyway. Stands to reason they can't caount. Ef you run acrost any of their soft hooks, Harvey, you'll know why,' said Dan, with an awful contempt.

'Always more and never less,
Every time we come to dress,

Long Jack roared down the hatch, and the 'second ha'af' scrambled up at once.

The shadow of the masts and rigging, with the never-furled riding-sail, rolled to and fro on the heaving deck in the moonlight, and the pile of fish by the stern shone like a dump of fluid silver. In the hold there were tramplings and rumblings where Disko Troop and Tom Platt moved among the salt-bins. Dan passed Harvey a pitchfork, and led him to the inboard end of the rough table, where Uncle Salters was drumming impatiently with a knife-haft. A tub of salt water lay at his feet.

'You pitch to dad an' Tom Platt down the hatch, an' take keer Uncle Salters don't cut yer eye out,' said Dan, swinging himself into the hold. 'I'll pass salt below.'

Penn and Manuel stood knee-deep among cod in the pen, flourishing drawn knives. Long Jack, a basket at his feet and mittens on his hands, faced Uncle Salters at the table, and Harvey stared at the pitchfork and the tub.

'Hi!' shouted Manuel, stooping to the fish, and bringing one up with a finger under its gill and a finger in its

eye. He laid it on the edge of the pen; the knife-blade glimmered with a sound of tearing, and the fish, slit from throat to vent, with a nick on either side of the neck, dropped at Long Jack's feet.

'Hi!' said Long Jack, with a scoop of his mittened hand. The cod's liver dropped in the basket. Another wrench and scoop sent the head and offal flying, and the empty fish slid across to Uncle Salters, who snorted fiercely. There was another sound of tearing, the backbone flew over the bulwarks, and the fish, headless, gutted, and open, splashed in the tub, sending the salt water into Harvey's astonished mouth. After the first yell, the men were silent. The cod moved along as though they were alive, and long ere Harvey had ceased wondering at the miraculous dexterity of it all, his tub was full.

'Pitch!' grunted Uncle Salters, without turning his head, and Harvey pitched the fish by twos and threes down the hatch.

'Hi! Pitch 'em bunchy,' shouted Dan. 'Don't scatter! Uncle Salters is the best splitter in the fleet. Watch him mind his book!'

Indeed, it looked a little as though the round uncle were cutting magazine pages against time. Manuel's body, cramped over from the hips, stayed like a statue; but his long arms grabbed the fish without ceasing. Little Penn toiled valiantly, but it was easy to see he was weak. Once or twice Manuel found time to help him without breaking the chain of supplies, and once Manuel howled because he had caught his finger in a Frenchman's hook. These hooks are made of soft metal to be re-bent after use; but the cod very often get away with them and are hooked again elsewhere; and

that is one of the many reasons why Gloucester boats despise the Frenchmen.

Down below, the rasping sound of rough salt rubbed on rough flesh sounded like the whirring of a grindstone —a steady undertune to the 'click-nick' of the knives in the pen, the wrench and schloop of torn heads, dropped livers, and flying offal; the 'caraaah' of Uncle Salters's knife scooping away backbones; and the flap of wet, opened bodies falling into the tub.

At the end of an hour Harvey would have given the world to rest; for fresh, wet cod weigh more than you would think, and his back ached with the steady pitching. But he felt for the first time in his life that he was one of a working gang of men, took pride in the thought, and held on sullenly.

'Knife oh!' shouted Uncle Salters at last. Penn doubled up, gasping among the fish, Manuel bowed back and forth to supple himself, and Long Jack leaned over the bulwarks. The cook appeared, noiseless as a black shadow, collected a mass of backbones and heads, and retreated.

'Blood-ends for breakfast an' head-chowder,' said Long Jack, smacking his lips.

'Knife oh!' repeated Uncle Salters, waving the flat, curved splitter's weapon.

'Look by your foot, Harve,' cried Dan below.

Harvey saw half a dozen knives stuck in a cleat in the hatch combing. He dealt these around, taking over the dulled ones.

'Water!' said Disko Troop.

'Scuttle-butt's for'ard an' the dipper's alongside. Hurry, Harve,' said Dan.

He was back in a minute with a big dipperful of stale

brown water which tasted like nectar, and loosed the jaws of Disko and Tom Platt.

'These are cod,' said Disko. 'They ain't Damarskus figs, Tom Platt, nor yet silver bars. I've told you that every single time sence we've sailed together.'

'A matter o' seven seasons,' returned Tom Platt coolly. 'Good stowin's good stowin' all the same, an' there's a right an' a wrong way o' stowin' ballast even. If you'd ever seen four hundred ton o' iron set into the—'

'Hi!' With a yell from Manuel the work began again, and never stopped till the pen was empty. The instant the last fish was down, Disko Troop rolled aft to the cabin with his brother; Manuel and Long Jack went forward; Tom Platt only waited long enough to slide home the hatch ere he too disappeared. In half a minute Harvey heard deep snores in the cabin, and he was staring blankly at Dan and Penn.

'I did a little better that time, Danny,' said Penn, whose eyelids were heavy with sleep. 'But I think it is my duty to help clean.'

'Wouldn't hev your conscience fer a thousand quintal,' said Dan. 'Turn in, Penn. You've no call to do boys' work. Draw a bucket, Harvey. Oh, Penn, dump these in the gurry-butt 'fore you sleep. Kin you keep awake that long?'

Penn took up the heavy basket of fish-livers, emptied them into a cask with a hinged top lashed by the foc'sle; then he too dropped out of sight in the cabin.

'Boys clean up after dressin'-down, an' first watch in ca'am weather is boys' watch on the "We're Here." ' Dan sluiced the pen energetically, unshipped the table, set it up to dry in the moonlight, ran the red knife-

blades through a wad of oakum, and began to sharpen them on a tiny grindstone, as Harvey threw offal and backbones overboard under his direction.

At the first splash a silvery-white ghost rose bolt upright from the oily water and sighed a weird whistling sigh. Harvey started back with a shout, but Dan only laughed. 'Grampus,' said he. 'Beggin' fer fish-heads. They up-eend thet way when they're hungry. Breath on him like the doleful tombs, hain't he?' A horrible stench of decayed fish filled the air as the pillar of white sank, and the water bubbled oilily. 'Hain't ye never seen a grampus up-eend before? You'll see 'em by hundreds 'fore ye're through. Say, it's good to hev a boy aboard again. Otto was too old, an' a Dutchy at that. Him an' me we fought consid'ble. Wouldn't ha' keered fer thet ef he'd hed a Christian tongue in his head. Sleepy?'

'Dead sleepy,' said Harvey, nodding forward.

'Mustn't sleep on watch. Rouse up an' see ef our anchor-light's bright an' shinin'. You're on watch now, Harve.'

'Pshaw! What's to hurt us? Bright's day. Sn—orrr!'

'Jest when things happen, dad says. Fine weather's good sleepin', an' 'fore you know mebbe you're cut in two by a liner, an' seventeen brass-bound officers, all gen'elmen, lift their hand to it that your lights was aout an' there was a thick fog. Harve, I've kinder took to you, but ef you nod onct more I'll lay into you with a rope's end.'

The moon, who sees many strange things on the Banks, looked down on a slim youth in knickerbockers and a red jersey, staggering around the cluttered decks

of a seventy-ton schooner, while behind him, waving a knotted rope, walked, after the manner of an executioner, a boy who yawned and nodded between the blows he dealt.

The lashed wheel groaned and kicked softly, the riding-sail slatted a little in the shifts of the light wind, the windlass creaked, and the miserable procession continued. Harvey expostulated, threatened, whimpered, and at last wept outright, while Dan, the words clotting on his tongue, spoke of the beauty of watchfulness and slashed away with the rope's end, punishing the dories as often as he hit Harvey. At last the clock in the cabin struck ten, and upon the tenth stroke little Penn crept on deck. He found two boys in two tumbled heaps side by side on the main hatch, so deeply asleep that he actually rolled them to their berths.

CHAPTER III

IT was the forty-fathom slumber that clears the soul and eye and heart, and sends you to breakfast ravening. They emptied a big tin dish of juicy fragments of fish—the blood-ends the cook had collected overnight. They cleaned up the plates and pans of the elder mess, who were out fishing, sliced pork for the midday meal, swabbed down the foc'sle, filled the lamps, drew coal and water for the cook, and investigated the fore-hold, where the boat's stores were stacked. It was another perfect day—soft, mild, and clear; and Harvey breathed to the very bottom of his lungs.

More schooners had crept up in the night, and the long blue seas were full of sails and dories. Far away on the horizon, the smoke of some liner, her hull invisible, smudged the blue, and to eastward a big ship's topgallant sails, just lifting, made a square nick in it. Disko Troop was smoking by the roof of the cabin—one eye on the craft around, and the other on the little fly at the mainmast-head.

'When dad kerflummoxes that way,' said Dan in a whisper, 'he's doin' some high-line thinkin' fer all hands. I'll lay my wage an' share we'll make berth soon. Dad he knows the cod, an' the fleet they know dad knows. See 'em comin' up one by one, lookin' fer nothin' in particular, o' course, but scrowgin' on us all the time?

There's the "Prince Leboo"; she's a Chatham boat. She's crep' up sence last night. An' see that big one with a patch in her foresail an' a new jib? She's the "Carrie Pitman" from West Chatham. She won't keep her canvas long onless her luck's changed since last season. She don't do much 'cep' drift. There ain't an anchor made 'll hold her. . . . When the smoke puffs up in little rings like that, dad's studyin' the fish. Ef we speak to him now, he'll git mad. Las' time I did, he jest took an' hove a boot at me.'

Disko Troop stared forward, the pipe between his teeth, with eyes that saw nothing. As his son said, he was studying the fish—pitting his knowledge and experience on the Banks against the roving cod in his own sea. He accepted the presence of the inquisitive schooners on the horizon as a compliment to his powers. But now that it was paid, he wished to draw away and make his berth alone, till it was time to go up to the Virgin and fish in the streets of that roaring town upon the waters. So Disko Troop thought of recent weather, and gales, currents, food supplies, and other domestic arrangements, from the point of view of a twenty-pound cod; was, in fact, for an hour, a cod himself, and looked remarkably like one. Then he removed the pipe from his teeth.

'Dad,' said Dan, 'we've done our chores. Can't we go over-side a piece? It's good catchin' weather.'

'Not in that cherry-coloured rig ner them ha'af-baked brown shoes. Give him suthin' fit to wear.'

'Dad's pleased—that settles it,' said Dan delightedly, dragging Harvey into the cabin, while Troop pitched a key down the steps. 'Dad keeps my spare rig where he can overhaul it, 'cause ma sez I'm keerless.' He

rummaged through a locker, and in less than three minutes Harvey was adorned with fisherman's rubber boots that came half up his thigh, a heavy blue jersey well darned at the elbows, a pair of nippers, and a sou'wester.

'Naow you look somethin' like,' said Dan. 'Hurry!'

'Keep nigh an' handy,' said Troop, 'an' don't go visitin' raound the fleet. Ef any one asks you what I'm cal'latin to do, speak the truth an' say ye don't know.'

A little red dory, labelled 'Hattie S.', lay astern of the schooner. Dan hauled in the painter, and dropped lightly on to the bottom boards, while Harvey tumbled clumsily after.

'That's no way o' gettin' into a boat,' said Dan. 'Ef there was any sea you'd go to the bottom, sure. You've got to learn to meet her.'

Dan fitted the thole-pins, took the forward thwart, and watched Harvey's work. The boy had rowed, in a lady-like fashion, on the Adirondack ponds; but there is a difference between squeaking pins and well-balanced rullocks—light sculls and stubby, eight-foot sea-oars. They stuck in the gentle swell, and Harvey grunted.

'Short! Row short!' said Dan. 'Ef you cramp your oar in any kind o' sea you're liable to turn her over. Ain't she a daisy? Mine, too.'

The little dory was specklessly clean. In her bows lay a tiny anchor, two jugs of water, and some seventy fathoms of thin brown dory-roding. A tin dinner-horn rested in cleats just under Harvey's right hand, beside an ugly-looking maul, a short gaff, and a shorter wooden stick. A couple of lines, with very heavy leads and double cod-hooks, all neatly coiled on square reels, were stuck in their place by the gunwale.

'Where's the sail and mast?' said Harvey, for his hands were beginning to blister.

Dan chuckled. 'Ye don't sail fishin'-dories much. Ye pull; but ye needn't pull so hard. Don't you wish you owned her?'

'Well, I guess my father might give me one or two if I asked 'em,' Harvey replied. He had been too busy to think much of his family till then.

'That's so. I forgot your dad's a millionaire. You don't act millionary any, naow. But a dory an' craft an' gear'—Dan spoke as though she were a whaleboat—'costs a heap. Think your dad 'ud give you one fer—fer a pet like?'

'Shouldn't wonder. It would be 'most the only thing I haven't stuck him for yet.'

''Must be an expensive kinder kid to home. Don't slitheroo thet way, Harve. Short's the trick, because no sea's ever dead still, an' the swells 'll—'

Crack! The loom of the oar kicked Harvey under the chin and knocked him backwards.

'That was what I was goin' to say. I hed to learn too, but I wasn't more than eight years old when I got my schoolin'.'

Harvey regained his seat with aching jaws and a frown.

'No good gettin' mad at things, dad says. It's our own fault ef we can't handle 'em, he says. Le's try here. Manuel 'll give us the water.'

The 'Portugee' was rocking fully a mile away, but when Dan up-ended an oar, he waved his left arm three times.

'Thirty fathom,' said Dan, stringing a salt clam on to the hook. 'Over with the doughboys. Bait same's I do, Harve, an' don't snarl your reel.'

Dan's line was out long before Harvey had mastered the mystery of baiting and heaving out the leads. The dory drifted along easily. It was not worth while to anchor till they were sure of good ground.

'Here we come!' Dan shouted, and a shower of spray rattled on Harvey's shoulders as a big cod flapped and kicked alongside. 'Muckle, Harvey, muckle! Under your hand! Quick!'

Evidently 'muckle' could not be the dinner-horn, so Harvey passed over the maul, and Dan scientifically stunned the fish before he pulled it inboard, and wrenched out the hook with the short wooden stick he called a 'gob-stick.' Then Harvey felt a tug, and pulled up zealously.

'Why, these are strawberries!' he shouted. 'Look!'

The hook had fouled among a bunch of strawberries, red on one side and white on the other—perfect reproductions of the land fruit, except that there were no leaves, and the stem was all pipy and slimy.

'Don't tech 'em! Slat 'em off. Don't—'

The warning came too late. Harvey had picked them from the hook, and was admiring them.

'Ouch!' he cried, for his fingers throbbed as though he had grasped many nettles.

'Naow ye know what strawberry-bottom means. Nothin' 'cep' fish should be teched with the naked fingers, dad says. Slat 'em off agin the gunnel, an' bait up, Harve. Lookin' won't help any. It's all in the wages.'

Harvey smiled at the thought of his ten and a half dollars a month, and wondered what his mother would say if she could see him hanging over the edge of a fishing-dory in mid-ocean. She suffered agonies when-

ever he went out on Saranac Lake; and, by the way, Harvey remembered distinctly that he used to laugh at her anxieties. Suddenly the line flashed through his hand, stinging even through the 'nippers,' the woollen circlets supposed to protect it.

'He's a logy. Give him room accordin' to his strength,' cried Dan. 'I'll help ye.'

'No, you won't,' Harvey snapped, as he hung on to the line. 'It's my first fish. Is—is it a whale?'

'Halibut, mebbe.' Dan peered down into the water alongside and flourished the big 'muckle,' ready for all chances. Something white and oval flickered and fluttered through the green. 'I'll lay my wage an' share he's over a hundred. Are you so everlastin' anxious to land him alone?'

Harvey's knuckles were raw and bleeding where they had been banged against the gunwale; his face was purple-blue between excitement and exertion; he dripped with sweat, and was half-blinded from staring at the circling sunlit ripples about the swiftly-moving line. The boys were tired long ere the halibut, who took charge of them and the dory for the next twenty minutes. But the big flat fish was gaffed and hauled in at last.

'Beginner's luck,' said Dan, wiping his forehead. 'He's all of a hundred.'

Harvey looked at the huge gray-and-mottled creature with unspeakable pride. He had seen halibut many times on marble slabs ashore, but it had never occurred to him to ask how they came inland. Now he knew; and every inch of his body ached with fatigue.

'Ef dad was along,' said Dan, hauling up, 'he'd read the signs plain's print. The fish are runnin' smaller an' smaller, an' you've took 'baout as logy a halibut's we're

apt to find this trip. Yesterday's catch—did ye notice it?—was all big fish an' no halibut. Dad, he'd read them signs right off. Dad says everythin' on the Banks is signs, an' can be read wrong er right. Dad's deeper'n the Whale-hole.'

Even as he spoke some one fired a pistol on the 'We're Here,' and a potato-basket was run up in the fore-rigging.

'What did I say, naow? That's the call fer the whole crowd. Dad's onter something, er he'd never break fishin' this time o' day. Reel up, Harve, an' we'll pull back.'

They were to windward of the schooner, just ready to flirt the dory over the still sea, when sounds of woe half a mile off led them to Penn, who was careering around a fixed point, for all the world like a gigantic water-bug. The little man backed away and came down again with enormous energy, but at the end of each manœuvre his dory swung round and snubbed herself on her rope.

'We'll hev to help him, else he'll root an' seed here,' said Dan.

'What's the matter?' said Harvey. This was a new world, where he could not lay down the law to his elders, but had to ask questions humbly. And the sea was horribly big and unexcited.

'Anchor's fouled. Penn's always losing 'em. Lost two this trip a'ready—on sandy bottom too—an' dad says next one he loses, sure's fishin', he'll give him the kelleg. That 'ud break Penn's heart.'

'What's a "kelleg"?' said Harvey, who had a vague idea it might be some kind of marine torture, like keel-hauling in the story-books.

'Big stone instid of an anchor. You kin see a kelleg ridin' in the bows fur's you can see a dory, an' all the fleet knows what it means. They'd guy him dreadful. Penn couldn't stand that no more'n a dog with a dipper to his tail. He's so everlastin' sensitive. Hello, Penn! Stuck again? Don't try any more o' your patents. Come up on her, and keep your rodin' straight up an' down.'

'It doesn't move,' said the little man, panting. 'It doesn't move at all, and, indeed, I tried everything.'

'What's all this hurrah's-nest for'ard?' said Dan, pointing to a wild tangle of spare oars and dory-roding, all matted together by the hand of inexperience.

'Oh, that,' said Penn proudly, 'is a Spanish windlass. Mr. Salters showed me how to make it; but even that doesn't move her.'

Dan bent low over the gunwale to hide a smile, twitched once or twice on the roding, and, behold, the anchor drew at once.

'Haul up, Penn,' he said, laughing, 'er she'll git stuck again.'

They left him regarding the weed-hung flukes of the little anchor with big, pathetic blue eyes, and thanking them profusely.

'Oh, say, while I think of it, Harve,' said Dan, when they were out of ear-shot, 'Penn ain't quite all caulked. He ain't nowise dangerous, but his mind's give out. See?'

'Is that so, or is it one of your father's judgments?' Harvey asked as he bent to his oars. He felt he was learning to handle them more easily.

'Dad ain't mistook this time. Penn's a sure 'nuff loony. No, he ain't thet exactly, so much ez a harmless

ijjit. It was this way (you're rowin' quite so, Harve), an' I tell you 'cause it's right you orter know. He was a Moravian preacher once. Jacob Boller wuz his name, dad told me, an' he lived with his wife an' four children somewheres out Pennsylvania way. Well, Penn he took his folks along to a Moravian meetin'—camp-meetin' most like—an' they stayed over jest one night in Johnstown. You've heerd talk o' Johnstown?'

Harvey considered. 'Yes, I have. But I don't know why. It sticks in my head same as Ashtabula.'

'Both was big accidents—thet's why, Harve. Well, that one single night Penn and his folks was to the hotel Johnstown was wiped out. Dam bust an' flooded her, an' the houses struck adrift an' bumped into each other an' sunk. I've seen the pictures, an' they're dretful. Penn, he saw his folk drowned all 'n a heap 'fore he rightly knew what was comin'. His mind give out from that on. He mistrusted somethin' hed happened up to Johnstown, but for the poor life of him he couldn't remember what, an' he jest drifted araound smilin' an' wonderin'. He didn't know what he was, nor yit what he hed bin, an' thet way he run agin Uncle Salters, who was visitin' 'n Allegheny City. Ha'af my mother's folks they live scattered inside o' Pennsylvania, an' Uncle Salters he visits araound winters. Uncle Salters he kinder adopted Penn, well knowin' what his trouble wuz; an' he brought him East, an' he give him work on his farm.'

'Why, I heard him calling Penn a farmer last night when the boats bumped. Is your Uncle Salters a farmer?'

'Farmer!' shouted Dan. 'There ain't water enough 'tween here an' Hatt'rus to wash the furrer-mould off'n

his boots. He's jest everlastin' farmer. Why, Harve, I've seen thet man hitch up a bucket, 'long towards sundown, an' set twiddlin' the spigot to the scuttle-butt same's ef 'twuz a cow's bag. He's thet much farmer! Well, Penn an' he they ran the farm—up Exeter way, 'twuz. Uncle Salters he sold it this spring to a jay from Boston as wanted to build a summer haouse, an' he got a heap for it. Well, them two loonies scratched along till, one day, Penn's church he'd belonged to—the Moravians—found out where he wuz drifted an' layin', an' wrote to Uncle Salters. Never heerd what they said exactly; but Uncle Salters was mad. He's a 'piscopalian mostly—but he jest let 'em hev it both sides o' the bow, 's if he was a Baptist; an' sez he warn't goin' to give up Penn to any blame Moravian connection in Pennsylvania or anywheres else. Then he come to dad, towin' Penn,—thet was two trips back,—an' sez he an' Penn must fish a trip fer their health. Guess he thought the Moravians wouldn't hunt the Banks fer Jacob Boller. Dad was agreeable, fer Uncle Salters he'd been fishin' off an' on fer thirty years, when he warn't inventin' patent manures, an' he took quarter-share in the "We're Here"; an' the trip done Penn so much good, dad made a habit o' takin' him. Some day, dad sez, he'll remember his wife an' kids an' Johnstown, an' then, like's not, he'll die, dad sez. Don't ye talk abaout Johnstown, ner such things to Penn, 'r Uncle Salters he'll heave ye overboard.'

'Poor Penn!' murmured Harvey. 'I shouldn't ever have thought Uncle Salters cared for him by the look of 'em together.'

'I like Penn though; we all do,' said Dan. 'We ought to ha' give him a tow, but I wanted to tell ye first.'

They were close to the schooner now, the other boats a little behind them.

'You needn't heave in the dories till after dinner,' said Troop from the deck. 'We'll dress-daown right off. Fix table, boys!'

'Deeper'n the Whale-deep,' said Dan, with a wink, as he set the gear for dressing-down. 'Look at them boats that hev edged up sence mornin'. They're all waitin' on dad. See 'em, Harve?'

'They are all alike to me.' And indeed, to a landsman, the nodding schooners around seemed run from the same mould.

'They ain't, though. That yaller, dirty packet with her bowsprit steeved that way, she's the "Hope of Prague." Nick Brady's her skipper, the meanest man on the Banks. We'll tell him so when we strike the Main Ledge. 'Way off yander's the "Day's Eye." The two Jeraulds own her. She's from Harwich; fastish, too, an' hez good luck; but dad, he'd find fish in a graveyard. Them other three, side along, they're the "Margie Smith," "Rose," and "Edith S. Walen," all from home. Guess we'll see the "Abbie M. Deering" to-morrer, dad, won't we? They're all slippin' over from the shoal o' 'Queereau.'

'You won't see many boats to-morrow, Danny.' When Troop called his son Danny, it was a sign that the old man was pleased. 'Boys, we're too crowded,' he went on, addressing the crew as they clambered inboard. 'We'll leave 'em to bait big an' catch small.' He looked at the catch in the pen, and it was curious to see how little and level the fish ran. Save for Harvey's halibut, there was nothing over fifteen pounds on deck.

'I'm waitin' on the weather,' he added.

'Ye'll have to make it yourself, Disko, for there's no sign I can see,' said Long Jack, sweeping the clear horizon.

And yet, half an hour later, as they were dressing-down, the Bank fog dropped on them, 'between fish and fish,' as they say. It drove steadily and in wreaths, curling and smoking along the colourless water. The men stopped dressing-down without a word. Long Jack and Uncle Salters slipped the windlass brakes into their sockets, and began to heave up the anchor; the windlass jarring as the wet hempen cable strained on the barrel. Manuel and Tom Platt gave a hand at the last. The anchor came up with a sob, and the riding-sail bellied as Troop steadied her at the wheel. 'Up jib and foresail,' said he.

'Slip 'em in the smother!' shouted Long Jack, making fast the jib-sheet, while the others raised the clacking, rattling rings of the foresail; and the foreboom creaked as the 'We're Here' looked up into the wind and dived off into blank, whirling white.

'There's wind behind this fog,' said Troop.

It was all wonderful beyond words to Harvey; and the most wonderful part was that he heard no orders except an occasional grunt from Troop, ending with, 'That's good, my son!'

'Never seen anchor weighed before?' said Tom Platt, to Harvey gaping at the damp canvas of the foresail.

'No. Where are we going?'

'Fish and make berth, as you'll find out 'fore you've bin a week aboard. It's all new to you, but we never know what may come to us. Now, take me—Tom Platt—I'd never ha' thought—'

'It's better than fourteen dollars a month an' a bullet

in your belly,' said Troop, from the wheel. 'Ease your jumbo a grind.'

'Dollars an' cents better,' returned the man-o'-war's man, doing something to a big jib with a wooden spar tied to it. 'But we didn't think o' that when we manned the windlass brakes on the "Miss Jim Buck,"[1] outside Beaufort Harbour, with Fort Macon heavin' hot shot at our stern, an' a livin' gale atop of all. Where was you then, Disko?'

'Jest here, or hereabouts,' Disko replied, 'earnin' my bread on the deep waters, an' dodgin' Reb privateers. Sorry I can't accommodate you with red-hot shot, Tom Platt; but I guess we'll come aout all right on wind 'fore we see Eastern Point.'

There was an incessant slapping and chatter at the bows now, varied by a solid thud and a little spout of spray that clattered down on the foc'sle. The rigging dripped clammy drops, and the men lounged along the lee of the house—all save Uncle Salters, who sat stiffly on the main-hatch nursing his stung hands.

'Guess she'd carry stays'l,' said Disko, rolling one eye at his brother.

'Guess she wouldn't to any sorter profit. What's the sense o' wastin' canvas?' the farmer-sailor replied.

The wheel twitched almost imperceptibly in Disko's hands. A few seconds later a hissing wave-top slashed diagonally across the boat, smote Uncle Salters between the shoulders, and drenched him from head to foot. He rose sputtering, and went forward only to catch another.

'See dad chase him all around the deck,' said Dan. 'Uncle Salters he thinks his quarter-share's our canvas.

[1]The 'Gemsbok,' U.S.N.?

Dad's put this duckin' act up on him two trips runnin'. Hi! That's found him where he feeds.' Uncle Salters had taken refuge by the foremast, but a wave slapped him over the knees. Disko's face was as blank as the circle of the wheel.

'Guess she'd lie easier under stays'l, Salters,' said Disko, as though he had seen nothing.

'Set your old kite, then,' roared the victim through a cloud of spray; 'only don't lay it to me if anything happens. Penn, you go below right off an' git your coffee. You ought to hev more sense than to bum araound on deck this weather.'

'Now they'll swill coffee an' play checkers till the cows come home,' said Dan, as Uncle Salters hustled Penn into the fore-cabin. 'Look's to me like's if we'd all be doin' so fer a spell. There's nothin' in creation deader-limpsey-idler 'n a Banker when she ain't on fish.'

'I'm glad ye spoke, Danny,' cried Long Jack, who had been casting round in search of amusement. 'I'd clean forgot we'd a passenger under that T-wharf hat. There's no idleness for thim that don't know their ropes. Pass him along, Tom Platt, an' we'll larn him.'

' 'Tain't my trick this time,' grinned Dan. 'You've got to go it alone. Dad learned me with a rope's end.'

For an hour Long Jack walked his prey up and down, teaching, as he said, 'things at the sea that ivry man must know, blind, dhrunk, or asleep.' There is not much gear to a seventy-ton schooner with a stump foremast, but Long Jack had a gift of expression. When he wished to draw Harvey's attention to the peak-halyards, he dug his knuckles into the back of the boy's neck and kept him at gaze for half a minute. He emphasised the difference between fore and aft generally

by rubbing Harvey's nose along a few feet of the boom, and the lead of each rope was fixed in Harvey's mind by the end of the rope itself.

The lesson would have been easier had the deck been at all free; but there appeared to be a place for everything and anything except a man. Forward lay the windlass and its tackle, with the chain and hemp cables, all very unpleasant to trip over; the foc'sle stove-pipe, and the gurry-butts by the foc'sle hatch to hold the fish-livers. Aft of these the fore-boom and booby of the main-hatch took all the space that was not needed for the pumps and dressing-pens. Then came the nests of dories lashed to ring-bolts by the quarter-deck; the house, with tubs and oddments lashed all around it; and, last, the sixty-foot main-boom in its crutch, splitting things lengthwise, to duck and dodge under every time.

Tom Platt, of course, could not keep his oar out of the business, but ranged alongside with enormous and unnecessary descriptions of sails and spars on the old 'Ohio.'

'Niver mind fwhat he says; attind to me, Innocince. Tom Platt, this bally-hoo's not the "Ohio," an' you're mixing the bhoy bad.'

'He'll be ruined for life, beginnin' on a fore-an'-after this way,' Tom Platt pleaded. 'Give him a chance to know a few leadin' principles. Sailin's an art, Harvey, as I'd show you if I had ye in the fore-top o' the—'

'I know ut. Ye'd talk him dead an' cowld. Silince, Tom Platt! Now, after all I've said, how'd you reef the foresail, Harve? Take your time answerin'.'

'Haul that in,' said Harvey, pointing to leeward.

'Fwhat? The North Atlantuc?'

'No, the boom. Then run that rope you showed me back there—'

'That's no way,' Tom Platt burst in.

'Quiet! He's larnin', an' has not the names good yet. Go on, Harve.'

'Oh, it's the reef-pennant. I'd hook the tackle on to the reef-pennant, and then let down—'

'Lower the sail, child! Lower!' said Tom Platt, in a professional agony.

'Lower the throat and peak halyards,' Harvey went on. Those names stuck in his head.

'Lay your hand on thim,' said Long Jack.

Harvey obeyed. 'Lower till that rope-loop—on the after-leach—kris—no, it's cringle—till the cringle was down on the boom. Then I'd tie her up the way you said, and then I'd hoist up the peak and throat halyards again.'

'You've forgot to pass the tack-earing, but wid time and help ye'll larn. There's good and just reason for ivry rope aboard, or else 'twould be overboard. D'ye follow me? 'Tis dollars an' cents I'm puttin' into your pocket, ye skinny little supercargo, so that fwhin ye've filled out ye can ship from Boston to Cuba an' tell thim Long Jack larned you. Now I'll chase ye around a piece, callin' the ropes, an' you'll lay your hand on thim as I call.'

He began, and Harvey, who was feeling rather tired, walked slowly to the rope named. A rope's end licked round his ribs, and nearly knocked the breath out of him.

'When you own a boat,' said Tom Platt, with severe eyes, 'you can walk. Till then, take all orders at the run. Once more—to make sure!'

Harvey was in a glow with the exercise, and this last cut warmed him thoroughly. Now, he was a singularly

smart boy, the son of a very clever man and a very sensitive woman, with a fine resolute temper that systematic spoiling had nearly turned to mulish obstinacy. He looked at the other men, and saw that even Dan did not smile. It was evidently all in the day's work, though it hurt abominably. So he swallowed the hint with a gulp and a gasp and a grin. The same smartness that led him to take such advantage of his mother made him very sure that no one on the boat, except, maybe, Penn, would stand the least nonsense. One learns a great deal from a mere tone. Long Jack called over half a dozen more ropes, and Harvey danced over the deck like an eel at ebb tide, one eye on Tom Platt.

'Ver' good. Ver' good done,' said Manuel. 'After supper I show you a little schooner I make with all her ropes. So we shall learn.'

'Fust-class fer—a passenger,' said Dan. 'Dad he's jest allowed you'll be wuth your salt maybe 'fore you're draownded. Thet's a heap fer dad. I'll learn you more our next watch together.'

'Taller!' grunted Disko, peering through the fog as it smoked over the bows. There was nothing to be seen ten feet beyond the surging jib-boom, while alongside rolled the endless procession of solemn, pale waves whispering and lipping one to the other.

'Now I'll learn you something Long Jack can't,' shouted Tom Platt, as from a locker by the stern he produced a battered deep-sea lead hollowed at one end, smeared the hollow from a saucer full of tallow, and went forward. 'I'll learn you how to fly the Blue Pigeon. Shooo!'

Disko did something to the wheel that checked the schooner's way, while Manuel, with Harvey to help

(and a proud boy was Harvey), let down the jib in a lump on the boom. The lead sang a deep droning song as Tom Platt whirled it round and round.

'Go ahead, man,' said Long Jack impatiently. 'We're not drawin' twenty-five fut off Fire Island in a fog. There's no trick to ut.'

'Don't be jealous, Galway.' The released lead plopped into the sea far ahead as the schooner surged slowly forward.

'Soundin' is a trick, though,' said Dan, 'when your dipsey lead's all the eye you're like to hev for a week. What d'you make it, dad?'

Disko's face relaxed. His skill and honour were involved in the march he had stolen on the rest of the fleet, and he had his reputation as a master artist who knew the Banks blindfold. 'Sixty, mebbe—ef I'm any judge,' he replied, with a glance at the tiny compass in the window of the house.

'Sixty,' sang out Tom Platt, hauling in great wet coils.

The schooner gathered way once more. 'Heave!' said Disko, after a quarter of an hour.

'What d'you make it?' Dan whispered, and he looked at Harvey proudly. But Harvey was too proud of his own performances to be impressed just then.

'Fifty!' said the father. 'I mistrust we're right over the nick o' Green Bank on old Sixty-Fifty.'

'Fifty!' roared Tom Platt. They could scarcely see him through the fog. 'She's bust within a yard—like the shells at Fort Macon.'

'Bait up, Harve,' said Dan, diving for a line on the reel.

The schooner seemed to be straying promiscuously

through the smother, her headsail banging wildly. The men waited and looked at the boys, who began fishing.

'Heugh!' Dan's lines twitched on the scored and scarred rail. 'Now haow in thunder did dad know? Help us here, Harve. It's a big un. Poke-hooked, too.' They hauled together, and landed a goggle-eyed twenty-pound cod. He had taken the bait right into his stomach.

'Why, he's all covered with little crabs,' cried Harvey, turning him over.

'By the great hook-block, they're lousy already,' said Long Jack. 'Disko, ye kape your spare eyes under the keel.'

Splash went the anchor, and they all heaved over the lines, each man taking his own place at the bulwarks.

'Are they good to eat?' Harvey panted, as he lugged in another crab-covered cod.

'Sure. When they're lousy it's a sign they've all been herdin' together by the thousand, and when they take the bait that way they're hungry. Never mind how the bait sets. They'll bite on the bare hook.'

'Say, this is great!' Harvey cried, as the fish came in gasping and splashing—nearly all poke-hooked, as Dan had said. 'Why can't we always fish from the boat instead of from the dories?'

'Allus can, till we begin to dress-daown. Efter thet, the heads and offals 'ud scare the fish to Fundy. Boat fishin' ain't reckoned progressive, though, unless ye know as much as dad knows. Guess we'll run aout aour trawl to-night. Harder on the back, this, than from the dory, ain't it?'

It was rather back-breaking work, for in a dory the weight of a cod is water-borne till the last minute, and you are, so to speak, abreast of him; but the few feet of

a schooner's free-board make so much extra dead-hauling, and stooping over the bulwarks cramps the stomach. But it was wild and furious sport so long as it lasted; and a big pile lay aboard when the fish ceased biting.

'Where's Penn and Uncle Salters?' Harvey asked, slapping the slime off his oilskins, and reeling up the line in careful imitation of the others.

'Git's coffee and see.'

Under the yellow glare of the lamp on the pawl-post, the foc'sle table down and opened, utterly unconscious of fish or weather, sat the two men, a checker-board between them. Uncle Salters snarling at Penn's every move.

'What's the matter naow?' said the former, as Harvey, one hand in the leather loop at the head of the ladder, hung shouting to the cook.

'Big fish and lousy—heaps and heaps,' Harvey replied, quoting Long Jack. 'How's the game?'

Little Penn's jaw dropped. ''Tweren't none o' his fault,' snapped Uncle Salters. 'Penn's deef.'

'Checkers, weren't it?' said Dan, as Harvey staggered aft with the steaming coffee in a tin pail. 'That lets us out o' cleanin' up to-night. Dad's a jest man. They'll have to do it.'

'An' two young fellers I know'll bait up a tub or so o' trawl, while they're cleanin',' said Disko, lashing the wheel to his taste.

'Um! Guess I'd ruther clean up, dad.'

'Don't doubt it. Ye wun't, though. Dress-daown! Dress-daown! Penn'll pitch while you two bait up.'

'Why in thunder didn't them blame boys tell us you'd struck on?' said Uncle Salters, shuffling to his place at the table. 'This knife's gum-blunt, Dan.'

'Ef stickin' out cable don't wake ye, guess you'd better hire a boy o' your own,' said Dan, muddling about in the dusk over the tubs full of trawl-line lashed to windward of the house. 'Oh, Harve, don't ye want to slip down an' git's bait?'

'Bait ez we are,' said Disko. 'I mistrust shag-fishin' will pay better, ez things go.'

That meant the boys would bait with selected offal of the cod as the fish were cleaned—an improvement on paddling bare-handed in the little bait-barrels below. The tubs were full of neatly coiled line, carrying a big hook each few feet; and the testing and baiting of every single hook, with the stowage of the baited line so that it should run clear when shot from the dory, was a scientific business. Dan managed it in the dark, without looking, while Harvey caught his fingers on the barbs and bewailed his fate. But the hooks flew through Dan's fingers like tatting on an old maid's lap. 'I helped bait up trawl ashore 'fore I could well walk,' he said. 'But it's a putterin' job all the same. Oh, dad!' This shouted towards the hatch, where Disko and Tom Platt were salting. 'How many skates you reckon we'll need?'

''Baout three. Hurry!'

'There's three-hundred fathom to each tub,' Dan explained; 'more'n enough to lay out to-night. Ouch! Slipped up there, I did.' He stuck his finger in his mouth. 'I tell you, Harve, there ain't money in Gloucester 'ud hire me to ship on a reg'lar trawler. It may be progressive, but, barrin' that, it's the putterin'est, slimjammest business top o' earth.'

'I don't know what this is, if 'tisn't regular trawling,' said Harvey sulkily. 'My fingers are all cut to frazzles.'

'Pshaw! This is jest one o' dad's blame experiments. He don't trawl 'less there's mighty good reason fer it. Dad knows. Thet's why he's baitin' ez he is. We'll hev her saggin' full when we take her up er we won't see a fin.'

Penn and Uncle Salters cleaned up as Disko had ordained, but the boys profited little. No sooner were the tubs furnished than Tom Platt and Long Jack, who had been exploring the inside of a dory with a lantern, snatched them away, loaded up the tubs and some small painted trawl-buoys, and hove the boat overboard into what Harvey regarded as an exceedingly rough sea. 'They'll be drowned! Why, the dory's loaded like a freight-car,' he cried.

'We'll be back,' said Long Jack, 'an' in case you'll not be lookin' for us we'll lay into you both if the trawl's snarled.'

The dory surged up on the crest of a wave, and just when it seemed impossible that she could avoid smashing against the schooner's side, slid over the ridge, and was swallowed up in the damp dusk.

'Take a-hold here, an' keep ringin' steady,' said Dan, passing Harvey the lanyard of a bell that hung just behind the windlass.

Harvey rang lustily, for he felt two lives depended on him. But Disko in the cabin, scrawling in the log-book, did not look like a murderer, and when he went to supper he even smiled drily at the anxious Harvey.

'This ain't no weather,' said Dan. 'Why, you an' me could set thet trawl! They've only gone out jest far 'nough so's not to foul our cable. They don't need no bell, reelly.'

'Clang! cling! clang!' Harvey kept it up, varied with

occasional rub-a-dubs, for another half-hour. There was a bellow and a bump alongside. Manuel and Dan raced to the hooks of the dory-tackle; Long Jack and Tom Platt arrived on deck together, it seemed, one-half the North Atlantic at their backs, and the dory followed them in the air, landing with a clatter.

'Nary snarl,' said Tom Platt as he dripped. 'Danny, you'll do yet.'

'The pleasure av your comp'ny to the banquit,' said Long Jack, squelching the water from his boots as he capered like an elephant and stuck an oilskinned arm into Harvey's face. 'We do be condescending to honour the second half wid our presence.' And off they all four rolled to supper, where Harvey stuffed himself to the brim on fish-chowder and fried pies, and fell fast asleep just as Manuel produced from a locker a lovely two-foot model of the 'Lucy Holmes,' his first boat, and was going to show Harvey the ropes. Harvey never even twiddled his fingers as Penn pushed him into his bunk.

'It must be a sad thing—a very sad thing,' said Penn, watching the boy's face, 'for his mother and his father, who think he is dead. To lose a child—to lose a man-child!'

'Git out o' this, Penn,' said Dan. 'Go aft and finish your game with Uncle Salters. Tell dad I'll stand Harve's watch ef he don't keer. He's played aout.'

'Ver' good boy,' said Manuel, slipping out of his boots and disappearing into the black shadows of the lower bunk. 'Expec' he make good man, Danny. I no see he is any so mad as your parpa he says. Eh, wha-at?'

Dan chuckled, but the chuckle ended in a snore.

It was thick weather outside, with a rising wind, and the elder men stretched their watches. The hours struck clear in the cabin; the nosing bows slapped and scuffled with the seas; the foc'sle stove-pipe hissed and sputtered as the spray caught it; and the boys slept on, while Disko, Long Jack, Tom Platt, and Uncle Salters, each in turn, stumped aft to look at the wheel, forward to see that the anchor held, or to veer out a little more cable against chafing, with a glance at the dim anchor-light between each round.

CHAPTER IV

HARVEY waked to find the 'first half' at breakfast, the foc'sle door drawn to a crack, and every square inch of the schooner singing its own tune. The black bulk of the cook balanced behind the tiny galley over the glare of the stove, and the pots and pans in the pierced wooden board before it jarred and racketed to each plunge. Up and up the foc'sle climbed, yearning and surging and quivering, and then, with a clear, sickle-like swoop, came down into the seas. He could hear the flaring bows cut and squelch, and there was a pause ere the divided waters came down on the deck above, like a volley of buckshot. Followed the woolly sound of the cable in the hawse-hole; a grunt and squeal of the windlass; a yaw, a punt, and a kick, and the 'We're Here' gathered herself together to repeat the motions.

'Now, ashore,' he heard Long Jack saying; 'ye've chores, an' ye must do thim in any weather. Here we're well clear of the fleet, an' we've no chores—an' that's a blessin'. Good-night, all.' He passed like a big snake from the table to his bunk, and began to smoke. Tom Platt followed his example; Uncle Salters, with Penn, fought his way up the ladder to stand his watch, and the cook set for the 'second half.'

It came out of its bunks as the others had entered

theirs, with a shake and a yawn. It ate till it could eat no more; and then Manuel filled his pipe with some terrible tobacco, crotched himself between the pawl-post and a forward bunk, cocked his feet up on the table, and smiled tender and indolent smiles at the smoke. Dan lay at length in his bunk, wrestling with a gaudy, gilt-stopped accordion, whose tunes went up and down with the pitching of the 'We're Here.' The cook, his shoulders against the locker, where he kept the fried pies (Dan was fond of fried pies), peeled potatoes, with one eye on the stove in event of too much water finding its way down the pipe; and the general smell and smother were past all description.

Harvey considered affairs, wondered that he was not deathly sick, and crawled into his bunk again, as the softest and safest place, while Dan struck up 'I don't want to play in your yard,' as accurately as the wild jerks allowed.

'How long is this for?' Harvey asked of Manuel.

'Till she get a little quiet, and we can row to trawl. Perhaps to-night. Perhaps two days more. You do not like? Eh, wha-at?'

'I should have been crazy sick a week ago, but it doesn't seem to upset me now—much.'

'That is because we make you fisherman, these days. If I was you, when I come to Gloucester, I would give two, three big candles for my good luck.'

'Give who?'

'To be sure—the Virgin of our Church on the Hill. She is very good to fishermen all the time. That is why so few of us Portugee men ever are drowned.'

'You're a Roman Catholic, then?'

'I am a Madeira man. I am not a Porto Pico boy.

Shall I be Baptist, then? Eh, wha-at? I always give candles—two, three more when I come to Gloucester. The good Virgin she never forgets me, Manuel.'

'I don't sense it that way,' Tom Platt put in from his bunk; his scarred face lit up by the glare of a match as he sucked at his pipe. 'It stands to reason the sea's the sea; and you'll git jist about what's goin', candles or kerosene, fer that matter.'

''Tis a mighty good thing,' said Long Jack, 'to have a frind at coort, though. I'm o' Manuel's way o' thinkin'. About tin years back I was crew to a Sou' Boston market-boat. We was off Minot's Ledge wid a northeaster, butt first, atop of us, thicker'n burgoo. The ould man was dhrunk, his chin waggin' on the tiller, an' I sez to myself, "If iver I stick my boat-huk into T-wharf again, I'll show the saints fwhat manner o' craft they saved me out av." Now, I'm here, as ye can well see, an' the model of the dhirty ould "Kathleen" that took me a month to make, I gave ut to the priest, an' he hung ut up forninst the altar. There's more sense in givin' a model that's by way o' bein' a work av art than any candle. Ye can buy candles at store, but a model shows the good saints ye've tuk trouble an' are grateful.'

'D'you believe that, Irish?' said Tom Platt, turning on his elbow.

'Would I do ut if I did not, Ohio?'

'Wa-al, Enoch Fuller he made a model o' the old "Ohio," and she's to Salem museum now. Mighty pretty model, too, but I guess Enoch he never done it fer no sacrifice; an' the way I take it is—'

There were the makings of an hour-long discussion of the kind that fishermen love, where the talk runs in shout-

ing circles, and no one proves anything at the end, had not Dan struck up this cheerful rhyme:

'Up jumped the mackerel with his striped back.
Reef in the mainsail and haul on the tack;
For it's windy weather—'

Here Long Jack joined in.

'And it's blowy weather;
When the winds begin to blow, pipe all hands together!'

Dan went on, with a cautious look at Tom Platt, holding the accordion low in the bunk:

'Up jumped the cod with his chuckle-head,
Went to the main-chains to heave at the lead,
For it's windy weather,' etc.

Tom Platt seemed to be hunting for something. Dan crouched lower, but sang louder:

'Up jumped the flounder that swims to the ground.
Chuckle-head! Chuckle-head! Mind where ye sound!'

Tom Platt's huge rubber boot whirled across the foc'sle and caught Dan's uplifted arm. There was war between the man and the boy ever since Dan had discovered that the mere whistling of that tune would make him angry as he heaved the lead.

'Thought I'd fetch yer,' said Dan, returning the gift with precision. 'Ef you don't like my music, git out your fiddle. I ain't goin' to lie here all day an' listen to you an' Long Jack arguin' 'baout candles. Fiddle, Tom Platt; or I'll learn Harve here the tune!'

Tom Platt leaned down to a locker and brought up an

old white fiddle. Manuel's eye glistened, and from somewhere behind the pawl-post he drew out a tiny, guitar-like thing with wire strings, which he called a machette.

'"Tis a concert,' said Long Jack, beaming through the smoke. 'A reg'lar Boston concert.'

There was a burst of spray as the hatch opened, and Disko, in yellow oilskins, descended.

'Ye're just in time, Disko. Fwhat's she doin' outside?'

'Jest this!' He dropped on to the lockers with the push and heave of the 'We're Here.'

'We're singin' to kape our breakfasts down. Ye'll lead, av course, Disko,' said Long Jack.

'Guess there ain't more'n 'baout two old songs I know, an' ye've heard them both.'

His excuses were cut short by Tom Platt launching into a most dolorous tune, like unto the moaning of winds and the creaking of masts. With his eyes fixed on the beams above, Disko began this ancient, ancient ditty, Tom Platt flourishing all round him to make the tune and words fit a little:

'There is a crack packet—crack packet o' fame,
She hails from Noo York, an' the "Dreadnought's" her name,
You may talk o' your fliers—Swallow-tail and Black Ball—
But the "Dreadnought's" the packet that can beat them all.

'Now the "Dreadnought" she lies in the River Mersey,
Because of the tug-boat to take her to sea;
But when she's off soundings you shortly will know

(Chorus)

She's the Liverpool packet—O Lord, let her go.

'Now the "Dreadnought" she's howlin' 'crost the
Banks o' Newfoundland,
Where the water's all shallow and the bottom's all sand.
Sez all the little fishes that swim to and fro:

(Chorus)

"She's the Liverpool packet—O Lord, let her go!" '

There were scores of verses, for he worked the 'Dreadnought' every mile of the way between Liverpool and New York as conscientiously as though he were on her deck, and the accordion pumped and the fiddle squeaked beside him. Tom Platt followed with something about 'the rough and tough M'Ginn, who would pilot the vessel in.' Then they called on Harvey, who felt very flattered, to contribute to the entertainment; but all that he could remember were some pieces of 'Skipper Ireson's Ride' that he had been taught at the camp-school in the Adirondacks. It seemed that they might be appropriate to the time and place, but he had no more than mentioned the title, when Disko brought down one foot with a bang, and cried, 'Don't go on, young feller! That's a mistaken jedgment—one o' the worst kind, too, becaze it's catchin' to the ear.'

'I orter ha' warned you,' said Dan. 'Thet allus fetches dad.'

'What's wrong?' said Harvey, surprised and a little angry.

'All you're goin' to say,' said Disko. 'All dead

wrong from start to finish, an' Whittier he's to blame. I have no special call to right any Marblehead man, but 'tweren't no fault o' Ireson's. My father he told me the tale time an' again, an' this is the way 'twuz.'

'For the wan hundredth time,' put in Long Jack under his breath.

'Ben Ireson he was skipper o' the "Betty," young feller, comin' home from the Banks—that was before the war of 1812, but jestice is jestice at all times. They f'und the "Active" o' Portland, an' Gibbons o' that town he was her skipper; they f'und her leakin' off Cape Cod light. There was a terr'ble gale on, an' they was gettin' the "Betty" home's fast as they could craowd her. Well, Ireson he said there warn't any sense to reskin' a boat in that sea; the men they wouldn't hev it; and he laid it before them to stay by the "Active" till the sea run daown a piece. They wouldn't hev that either, hangin' araound the Cape in any sech weather, leak or no leak. They jest up stays'l an' quit, nat'rally takin' Ireson with 'em. Folks to Marblehead was mad at him not runnin' the risk, and becaze nex' day when the sea was ca'am (they never stopped to think o' that) some of the "Active's" folk was took off by a Truro man. They come into Marblehead with their own tale to tell, sayin' how Ireson had shamed his town, an' so forth an' so on; an' Ireson's men they was scared seein' public feelin' agin' 'em, an' they went back on Ireson, an' swore he was respons'ble for the hull act. 'Tweren't the women neither that tarred and feathered him—Marblehead women don't act that way —'twas a passel o' men an' boys, an' they carted him araound town in an old dory till the bottom fell aout an' Ireson he told 'em they'd be sorry for it some day.

Well, the facts come aout later, same's they usually do, too late to be any ways useful to an honest man; an' Whittier he come along an' picked up the slack eend of a lyin' tale, an' tarred and feathered Ben Ireson all over onct more after he was dead. 'Twas the only time Whittier ever slipped up, an' 'tweren't fair. I whaled Dan good when he brought that piece back from school. You don't know no better, o' course; but I've give you the facts, hereafter an' evermore to be remembered. Ben Ireson weren't no sech kind o' man as Whittier makes aout; my father he knew him well, before an' after that business, an' you beware o' hasty jedgments, young feller. Next!'

Harvey had never heard Disko talk so long, and collapsed with burning cheeks; but, as Dan said promptly, a boy could only learn what he was taught at school, and life was too short to keep track of every lie along the coast.

Then Manuel touched the jangling, jarring little machette to a queer tune, and sang something in Portuguese about 'Nina, innocente!' ending with a full-handed sweep that brought the song up with a jerk. Then Disko obliged with his second song, to an old-fashioned creaky tune, and all joined in the chorus. This is one stanza:

'Now Aprile is over and melted the snow,
And outer Noo Bedford we shortly must tow;
Yes, out o' Noo Bedford we shortly must clear,
We're the whalers that never see wheat in the ear.'

Here the fiddle went very softly for a while by itself, and then:

'Wheat-in-the-ear, my true-love's posy blowin';
Wheat-in-the-ear, we're goin' off to sea;
Wheat-in-the-ear, I left you fit for sowin';
When I come back a loaf o' bread you'll be!'

That made Harvey almost weep, though he could not tell why. But it was much worse when the cook dropped the potatoes and held out his hands for the fiddle. Still leaning against the locker door, he struck into a tune that was like something very bad but sure to happen whatever you did. After a little he sang, in an unknown tongue, his big chin down on the fiddle-tail, his white eyeballs glaring in the lamplight. Harvey swung out of his bunk to hear better; and amid the straining of the timbers and the wash of the waters the tune crooned and moaned on, like lee surf in a blind fog, till it ended with a wail.

'Jiminy Christmas! Thet gives me the blue creevles,' said Dan. 'What in thunder is it?'

'The song of Fin M'Coul,' said the cook, 'when he wass going to Norway.' His English was not thick, but all clear cut, as though it came from a gramophone.

'Faith, I've been to Norway, but I didn't make that unwholesim noise. 'Tis like some of the old songs, though,' said Long Jack, sighing.

'Don't let's hev another 'thout somethin' between,' said Dan; and the accordion struck up a rattling, catchy tune that ended:

'It's six an' twenty Sundays sence las' we saw the land,
With fifteen hunder quintal,
An' fifteen hunder quintal,
'Teen hunder toppin' quintal,
'Twixt old 'Queereau an' 'Grand!'

'Hold on!' roared Tom Platt. 'D'ye want to nail the trip, Dan? That's Jonah sure, 'less you sing it after all our salt's wet.'

'No, 'tain't. Is it, dad? Not unless you sing the very las' verse. You can't learn me anything on Jonahs!'

'What's that?' said Harvey. 'What's a Jonah?'

'A Jonah's anything that spoils the luck. Sometimes it's a man—sometimes it's a boy—or a bucket. I've known a splittin'-knife Jonah two trips till we was on to her,' said Tom Platt. 'There's all sorts o' Jonahs. Jim Bourke was one till he was drowned on Georges. I'd never ship with Jim Bourke, not if I was starvin'. There wuz a green dory on the "Ezra Flood." Thet was a Jonah too, the worst sort o' Jonah. Drowned four men she did, an' used to shine fiery o' nights, in the nest.'

'And you believe that?' said Harvey, remembering what Tom Platt had said about candles and models. 'Haven't we all got to take what's served?'

A mutter of dissent ran round the bunks. 'Outboard, yes; inboard, things can happen,' said Disko. 'Don't you go makin' a mock of Jonahs, young feller.'

'Well, Harve ain't no Jonah. Day after we catched him,' Dan cut in, 'we had a toppin' good catch.'

The cook threw up his head and laughed suddenly—a queer, thin laugh. He was a most disconcerting nigger.

'Murder!' said Long Jack. 'Don't do that again, doctor. We ain't used to ut.'

'What's wrong?' said Dan. 'Ain't he our mascot, an' didn't they strike on good after we'd struck him?'

'Oh yess,' said the cook. 'I know that, but the catch iss not finish yet.'

'He ain't goin' to do us any harm,' said Dan hotly. 'Where are ye hintin' an' edgin' to? He's all right.'

'No harm. No. But one day he will be your master, Danny.'

'That's all?' said Dan placidly. 'He wun't—not by a jugful.'

'Master!' said the cook, pointing to Harvey. 'Man!' and he pointed to Dan.

'That's news. Haow soon?' said Dan with a laugh.

'In some years, and I shall see it. Master and man—man and master.'

'How in thunder d'ye work that out?' said Tom Platt.

'In my head, where I can see.'

'Haow?' This from all the others at once.

'I do not know, but so it will be.' He dropped his head and went on peeling the potatoes, and not another word could they get out of him.

'Well,' said Dan, 'a heap o' things'll hev to come abaout 'fore Harve's any master o' mine; but I'm glad the doctor ain't choosen to mark him for a Jonah. Now, I mistrust Uncle Salters fer the Jonerest Jonah in the fleet regardin' his own special luck. Dunno ef it's spreadin' same's smallpox. He ought to be on the "Carrie Pitman." That boat's her own Jonah, sure—crews an' gear make no differ to her driftin'. Jiminy Christmas! She'll etch loose in a flat ca'am.'

'We're well clear o' the fleet, anyway,' said Disko. '"Carrie Pitman" an' all.' There was a rapping on the deck.

'Uncle Salters has catched his luck,' said Dan, as his father departed.

'It's blowed clear,' Disko cried, and all the foc'sle tumbled up for a bit of fresh air. The fog had gone,

but a sullen sea ran in great rollers behind it. The 'We're Here' slid, as it were, into long, sunk avenues and ditches which felt quite sheltered and homelike if they would only stay still; but they changed without rest or mercy, and flung up the schooner to crown one peak of a thousand gray hills, while the wind hooted through her rigging as she zigzagged down the slopes. Far away a sea would burst in a sheet of foam, and the others would follow suit as at a signal, till Harvey's eyes swam with the vision of interlacing whites and grays. Four or five Mother Carey's chickens stormed round in circles, shrieking as they swept past the bows. A rain-squall or two strayed aimlessly over the hopeless waste, ran down wind and back again, and melted away.

'Seems to me I saw somethin' flicker jest naow over yonder,' said Uncle Salters, pointing to the north-east.

'Can't be any of the fleet,' said Disko, peering under his eyebrows, a hand on the foc'sle gangway as the solid bows hatcheted into the troughs. 'Sea's oilin' over dretful fast. Danny, don't you want to skip up a piece an' see how aour trawl-buoy lays?'

Danny, in his big boots, trotted rather than climbed up the main rigging (this consumed Harvey with envy), hitched himself around the reeling cross-trees, and let his eye rove till it caught the tiny black buoy-flag on the shoulder of a mile-away swell.

'She's all right,' he hailed. 'Sail O! Dead to the no'th'ard, comin' down like smoke! Schooner she be, too.'

They waited yet another half-hour, the sky clearing in patches, with a flicker of sickly sun from time to time, that made patches of olive-green water. Then a stump-foremast lifted, ducked, and disappeared, to be followed

on the next wave by a high stern with old-fashioned wooden snail's-horn davits. The sails were red tanned.

'Frenchman!' shouted Dan. 'No, 'tain't neither. Da-ad!'

'That's no French,' said Disko. 'Salters, your blame luck holds tighter'n a screw in a keg-head.'

'I've eyes. It's Uncle Abishai.'

'You can't nowise tell fer sure.'

'The head-king of all Jonahs,' groaned Tom Platt. 'Oh, Salters, Salters, why wasn't you abed an' asleep?'

'How could I tell?' said poor Salters, as the schooner swung up.

She might have been the very 'Flying Dutchman,' so foul, draggled, and unkempt was every rope and stick aboard. Her old-style quarter-deck was some four or five feet high, and her rigging flew knotted and tangled like weed at a wharf-end. She was running before the wind—yawing frightfully—her staysail let down to act as a sort of extra foresail,—'scandalised,' they call it,—and her fore-boom guyed out over the side. Her bowsprit cocked up like an old-fashioned frigate's; her jib-boom had been fished and spliced and nailed and clamped beyond further repair; and as she hove herself forward, and sat down on her broad tail, she looked for all the world like a blouzy, frouzy, bad old woman sneering at a decent girl.

'That's Abishai,' said Salters. 'Full o' gin an' Judique men, an' the judgments o' Providence layin' fer him an' never takin' good holt. He's run in to bait, Miquelon way.'

'He'll run her under,' said Long Jack. 'That's no rig fer this weather.'

'Not he, 'r he'd 'a' done it long ago,' Disko replied.

'Looks 's if he cal'lated to run us under. Ain't she daown by the head more'n natural, Tom Platt?'

'Ef it's his style o' loadin' her she ain't safe,' said the sailor slowly. 'Ef she's spewed her oakum, he'd better git to his pumps mighty quick.'

The creature threshed up, wore round with a clatter and rattle, and lay head to wind within earshot.

A gray-beard wagged over the bulwark, and a thick voice yelled something Harvey could not understand. But Disko's face darkened. 'He'd resk every stick he hez to carry bad news. Says we're in fer a shift o' wind. He's in fer worse. Abishai! Abishai!' He waved his arm up and down with the gesture of a man at the pumps, and pointed forward. The crew mocked him and laughed.

'Jounce ye, an' strip ye, an' trip ye!' yelled Uncle Abishai. 'A livin' gale—a livin' gale. Yah! Cast up fer your last trip, all you Gloucester haddocks. You won't see Gloucester no more, no more!'

'Crazy full—as usual,' said Tom Platt. 'Wish he hadn't spied us, though.'

She drifted out of hearing while the gray-head yelled something about a dance at the Bay of Bulls and a dead man in the foc'sle. Harvey shuddered. He had seen the slovenly tilted decks and the savage-eyed crew.

'An' that's a fine little floatin' hell fer her draught,' said Long Jack. 'I wondher what mischief he's been at ashore.'

'He's a trawler,' Dan explained to Harvey, 'an' he runs in fer bait all along the coast. Oh, no, not home, he don't go. He deals along the south an' east shore up yonder.' He nodded in the direction of the pitiless Newfoundland beaches. 'Dad won't never take me

ashore there. They're a mighty tough crowd—an' Abishai's the toughest. You saw his boat? Well, she's nigh seventy year old, they say; the last o' the old Marblehead heel-tappers. They don't make them quarter-decks any more. Abishai don't use Marblehead, though. He ain't wanted there. He jes' drif's araound, in debt, trawlin' an' cussin' like you've heard. Bin a Jonah fer years an' years, he hez. Gits liquor from the Feecamp boats fer makin' spells an' selling winds an' such truck. Crazy, I guess.'

' 'Twon't be any use underrunnin' the trawl to-night,' said Tom Platt, with quiet despair. 'He come alongside special to cuss us. I'd give my wage an' share to see him at the gangway o' the old "Ohio" 'fore we quit floggin'. Jest abaout six dozen, an' Sam Mocatta layin' 'em on criss-cross!'

The dishevelled 'heel-tapper' danced drunkenly down wind, and all eyes followed her. Suddenly the cook cried in his gramophone voice: 'It wass his own death made him speak so! He iss fey—fey, I tell you! Look!' She sailed into a patch of watery sunshine three or four miles distant. The patch dulled and faded out, and even as the light passed so did the schooner. She dropped into a hollow and—was not.

'Run under, by the Great Hook-Block!' shouted Disko, jumping aft. 'Drunk or sober, we've got to help 'em. Heave short and break her out! Smart!'

Harvey was thrown on the deck by the shock that followed the setting of the jib and foresail, for they hove short on the cable, and to save time, jerked the anchor bodily from the bottom, heaving in as they moved away. This is a bit of brute force seldom resorted to except in matters of life and death, and the little 'We're Here'

complained like a human. They ran down to where Abishai's craft had vanished; found two or three trawl-tubs, a gin-bottle, and a stove-in dory, but nothing more. 'Let 'em go,' said Disko, though no one had hinted at picking them up. 'I wouldn't hev a match that belonged to Abishai aboard. Guess she run clear under. Must ha' been spewin' her oakum fer a week, an' they never thought to pump her. That's one more boat gone along o' leavin' port all hands drunk.'

'Glory be!' said Long Jack. 'We'd ha' been obliged to help 'em if they was top o' water.'

'Thinkin' o' that myself,' said Tom Platt.

'Fey! fey!' said the cook, rolling his eyes. 'He hass taken his own luck with him.'

'Ver' good thing, I think, to tell the fleet when we see. Eh, wha-at?' said Manuel. 'If you runna that way before the wind, and she work open her seams—' He threw out his hands with an indescribable gesture, while Penn sat down on the house and sobbed at the sheer horror and pity of it all. Harvey could not realise that he had seen death on the open waters, but he felt very sick.

Then Dan went up the cross-trees, and Disko steered them back to within sight of their own trawl-buoys just before the fog blanketed the sea once again.

'We go mighty quick hereabouts when we do go,' was all he said to Harvey. 'You think on that fer a spell, young feller. That was liquor.'

After dinner it was calm enough to fish from the decks—Penn and Uncle Salters were very zealous this time—and the catch was large and large fish.

'Abishai has shorely took his luck with him,' said Salters. 'The wind hain't backed ner riz ner nothin'.

How abaout the trawl? I despise superstition, anyway.'

Tom Platt insisted that they had much better haul the thing and make a new berth. But the cook said: 'The luck iss in two pieces. You will find it so when you look. I know.' This so tickled Long Jack that he overbore Tom Platt, and the two went out together.

Underrunning a trawl means pulling it in on one side of the dory, picking off the fish, rebaiting the hooks, and passing them back to the sea again—something like pinning and unpinning linen on a wash-line. It is a lengthy business and rather dangerous, for the long, sagging line may twitch a boat under in a flash. But when they heard: 'And naow to thee, O Capting' booming out of the fog, the crew of the 'We're Here' took heart. The dory swirled alongside well loaded; Tom Platt yelling for Manuel to act as relief-boat.

'The luck's cut square in two pieces,' said Long Jack, forking in the fish, while Harvey stood open-mouthed at the skill with which the plunging dory was saved from destruction. 'One half was jest punkins. Tom Platt wanted to haul her an' ha' done wid ut; but I said, "I'll back the doctor that has the second sight," an' the other half come up sagging full o' big uns. Hurry, Man'nle, an' bring 's a tub o' bait. There's luck afloat to-night.'

The fish bit at the newly-baited hooks from which their brethren had just been taken, and Tom Platt and Long Jack moved methodically up and down the length of the trawl, the boat's nose surging under the wet line of hooks, stripping the sea-cucumbers that they called pumpkins, slatting off the fresh-caught cod against the gunwale, rebaiting, and loading Manuel's dory till dusk.

'I'll take no risks,' said Disko then—'not with him floatin' around so near. Abishai won't sink fer a week. Heave in the dories an' we'll dress-daown after supper.'

That was a mighty dressing-down, attended by three or four blowing grampuses. It lasted till nine o'clock, and Disko was thrice heard to chuckle as Harvey pitched the split fish into the hold.

'Say, you're haulin' ahead dretful fast,' said Dan, when they ground the knives after the men had turned in. 'There's somethin' of a sea to-night, an' I hain't heard you make no remarks on it.'

'Too busy,' Harvey replied, testing a blade's edge. 'Come to think of it, she is a high-kicker.'

The little schooner was gambolling all around her anchor among the silver-tipped waves. Backing with a start of affected surprise at the sight of the strained cable, she pounced on it like a kitten, while the spray of her descent burst through the hawse-holes with the report of a gun. Shaking her head, she would say: 'Well, I'm sorry I can't stay any longer with you. I'm going North,' and would sidle off, halting suddenly with a dramatic rattle of her rigging. 'As I was just going to observe,' she would begin, as gravely as a drunken man addressing a lamp-post. The rest of the sentence (she acted her words in dumb-show, of course) was lost in a fit of the fidgets, when she behaved like a puppy chewing a string, a clumsy woman in a side-saddle, a hen with her head cut off, or a cow stung by a hornet, exactly as the whims of the sea took her.

'See her sayin' her piece. She's Patrick Henry naow,' said Dan.

She swung sideways on a roller, and gesticulated with her jib-boom from port to starboard.

'But—ez—fer—me, give me liberty—er give me—death!'

Wop! She sat down in the moon-path on the water, curtseying with a flourish of pride impressive enough had not the wheel-gear sniggered mockingly in its box.

Harvey laughed aloud. 'Why, it's just as if she was alive,' he said.

'She's as stiddy as a haouse an' as dry as a herrin',' said Dan enthusiastically, as he slung across the deck in a batter of spray. 'Fends 'em off an' fends 'em off, an' "Don't ye come anigh me," she sez. Look at her—jest look at her! Sakes! You should see one o' them toothpicks histin' up her anchor on her spike outer fifteen-fathom water.'

'What's a toothpick, Dan?'

'Them new haddockers an' herrin' boats. Fine's a yacht forward, with yacht sterns to 'em an' spike bowsprits, an' a haouse that 'ud take all our hold. I've heard that Burgess himself he made the models fer three or four of 'em. Dad's sot agin 'em on account o' their pitchin' an' joltin', but there's heaps o' money in 'em. Dad can find fish, but he ain't no ways progressive—he don't go with the march o' the times. They're chock-full o' labour-savin' jigs an' sech all. Ever seed the "Elector" o' Gloucester? She's a daisy, ef she is a toothpick.'

'What do they cost, Dan?'

'Hills o' dollars. Fifteen thousand, p'haps; more, mebbe. There's gold-leaf an' everything you kin think of.' Then to himself, half under his breath, 'Guess I'd call her "Hattie S.", too.'

CHAPTER V

THAT was the first of many talks with Dan, who told Harvey why he would transfer his dory's name to the imaginary Burgess-modelled haddocker. Harvey heard a good deal about the real Hattie at Gloucester; saw a lock of her hair—which Dan, finding fair words of no avail, had 'hooked' as she sat in front of him at school that winter—and a photograph. Hattie was about fourteen years old, with an awful contempt for boys, and had been trampling on Dan's heart through the winter. All this was revealed under oath of solemn secrecy on moonlit decks, in the dead dark, or in choking fog; the whining wheel behind them, the climbing deck in front, and without, the unresting, clamorous sea. Once, of course, as the boys came to know each other, there was a fight, which raged from bow to stern till Penn came up and separated them, but promised not to tell Disko, who thought fighting on watch rather worse than sleeping. Harvey was no match for Dan physically, but it says a great deal for his new training that he took his defeat and did not try to get even with his conqueror by underhand methods.

That was after he had been cured of a string of boils between his elbows and wrists, where the wet jersey and oilskins cut into the flesh. The salt water stung them unpleasantly, but when they were ripe, Dan treated

them with Disko's razor, and assured Harvey that now he was a 'blooded Banker'; the affliction of gurry-sores being the mark of the caste that claimed him.

Since he was a boy and very busy, he did not bother his head with too much thinking. He was exceedingly sorry for his mother, and often longed to see her and above all to tell her of this wonderful new life, and how brilliantly he was acquitting himself in it. Otherwise he preferred not to wonder too much how she was bearing the shock of his supposed death. But one day, as he stood on the foc'sle ladder, guying the cook, who had accused him and Dan of hooking fried pies, it occurred to him that this was a vast improvement on being snubbed by strangers in the smoking-room of a hired liner.

He was a recognised part of the scheme of things on the 'We're Here'; had his place at the table and among the bunks; and could hold his own in the long talks on stormy days, when the others were always ready to listen to what they called his 'fairy tales' of his life ashore. It did not take him more than two days and a quarter to feel that if he spoke of his own life—it seemed very far away—no one except Dan (and even Dan's belief was sorely tried) credited him. So he invented a friend, a boy he had heard of, who drove a miniature four-pony drag in Toledo, Ohio, and ordered five suits of clothes at a time, and led things called 'germans' at parties where the oldest girl was not quite fifteen, but all the presents were of solid silver. Salters protested that this kind of yarn was desperately wicked, if not indeed positively blasphemous, but he listened as greedily as the others; and their criticisms at the end gave Harvey entirely new notions on 'germans,' clothes,

cigarettes with gold-leaf tips, rings, watches, scent, small dinner-parties, champagne, card-playing, and hotel accommodation. Little by little he changed his tone when speaking of his 'friend,' whom Long Jack had christened 'the Crazy Kid,' 'the Gilt-edged Baby,' 'the Suckin' Vanderpoop,' and other pet names; and with his sea-booted feet cocked up on the table would even invent histories about silk pyjamas and specially imported neckwear, to the 'friend's' discredit. Harvey was a very adaptable person, with a keen eye and ear for every face and tone about him.

Before long he knew where Disko kept the old green-crusted quadrant that they called the 'hog-yoke'—under the bed-bag in his bunk. When he took the sun, and with the help of 'The Old Farmer's' almanac, found the latitude, Harvey would jump down into the cabin and scratch the reckoning and date with a nail on the rust of the stove-pipe. Now, the chief engineer of the liner could have done no more, and no engineer of thirty years' service could have assumed one half of the ancient-mariner air with which Harvey, first careful to spit over the side, made public the schooner's position for that day, and then, and not till then, relieved Disko of the quadrant. There is an etiquette in all these things.

The said 'hog-yoke,' an Eldridge chart, the farming almanac, Blunt's 'Coast Pilot,' and Bowditch's 'Navigator,' were all the weapons Disko needed to guide him, except the deep-sea lead that was his spare eye. Harvey nearly slew Penn with it when Tom Platt taught him first how to 'fly the blue pigeon'; and, though his strength was not equal to continuous sounding in any sort of a sea, for calm weather with a seven-pound lead on shoal water Disko used him freely. As Dan said:

''Tain't soundin's dad wants. It's samples. Grease her up good, Harve.' Harvey would tallow the cup at the end, and carefully bring the sand, shell, sludge, or whatever it might be, to Disko, who fingered and smelt it and gave judgment. As has been said, when Disko thought of cod he thought as a cod; and by some long-tested mixture of instinct and experience, moved the 'We're Here' from berth to berth, always with the fish, as a blindfolded chess-player moves on the unseen board.

But Disko's board was the Grand Bank—a triangle two hundred and fifty miles on each side—a waste of wallowing sea, cloaked with dank fog, vexed with gales, harried with drifting ice, scored by the tracks of the reckless liners, and dotted with the sails of the fishing-fleet.

For days they worked in fog—Harvey at the bell—till, grown familiar with the thick airs, he went out with Tom Platt, his heart rather in his mouth. But the fog would not lift, and the fish were biting, and no one can stay helplessly afraid for six hours at a time. Harvey devoted himself to his lines and the gaff or gob-stick as Tom Platt called for them; and they rowed back to the schooner guided by the bell and Tom's instinct; Manuel's conch sounding thin and faint beside them. But it was an unearthly experience, and, for the first time in a month, Harvey dreamed of the shifting, smoking floors of water round the dory, the lines that strayed away into nothing, and the air above that melted on the sea below ten feet from his straining eyes. A few days later he was out with Manuel on what should have been forty-fathom bottom, but the whole length of the roding ran out, and still the anchor found nothing, and Harvey grew mortally afraid, for that his last touch with earth

was lost. 'Whale-hole,' said Manuel, hauling in. 'That is good joke on Disko. Come!' and he rowed to the schooner to find Tom Platt and the others jeering at the skipper because, for once, he had led them to the edge of the barren Whale-deep, the blank hole of the Grand Bank. They made another berth through the fog, and that time the hair of Harvey's head stood up when he went out in Manuel's dory. A whiteness moved in the whiteness of the fog with a breath like the breath of the grave, and there was a roaring, a plunging, and spouting. It was his first introduction to the dread summer berg of the Banks, and he cowered in the bottom of the boat while Manuel laughed. There were days, though, clear and soft and warm, when it seemed a sin to do anything but loaf over the hand-lines and spank the drifting 'sunscalds' with an oar; and there were days of light airs, when Harvey was taught how to steer the schooner from one berth to another.

It thrilled through him when he first felt the keel answer to his hand on the spokes and slide over the long hollows as the foresail scythed back and forth against the blue sky. That was magnificent, in spite of Disko saying that it would break a snake's back to follow his wake. But, as usual, pride ran before a fall. They were sailing on the wind with the staysail—an old one, luckily—set, and Harvey jammed her right into it to show Dan how completely he had mastered the art. The foresail went over with a bang, and the foregaff stabbed and ripped through the staysail, which was, of course, prevented from going over by the mainstay. They lowered the wreck in awful silence, and Harvey spent his leisure hours for the next few days under Tom Platt's lee, learning to use a needle and palm. Dan

hooted with joy, for, as he said, he had made the very same blunder himself in his early days.

Boylike, Harvey imitated all the men by turns, till he had combined Disko's peculiar stoop at the wheel, Long Jack's swinging overhand when the lines were hauled, Manuel's round-shouldered but effective stroke in a dory, and Tom Platt's generous 'Ohio' stride along the deck.

''Tis beautiful to see how he takes to ut,' said Long Jack, when Harvey was looking out by the windlass one thick noon. 'I'll lay my wage an' share 'tis more'n half play-actin' to him, an' he consates himself he's a bowld mariner. Watch his little bit av a back now.'

'That's the way we all begin,' said Tom Platt. 'The boys they make believe all the time till they've cheated 'emselves into bein' men, an' so till they die—pretendin' an' pretendin'. I done it on the old "Ohio," I know. Stood my first watch—harbour watch—feelin' finer'n Farragut. Dan's full o' the same kind o' notions. See 'em now, actin' to be genewine moss-backs—every hair a rope-yarn an' blood Stockholm tar.' He spoke down the cabin stairs. 'Guess you're mistook in your judgments fer once, Disko. What in Rome made ye tell us all here the kid was crazy?'

'He wuz,' Disko replied. 'Crazy ez a loon when he come aboard; but I'll say he's sobered up consid'ble sence. I cured him.'

'He yarns good,' said Tom Platt. 'T'other night he told us abaout a kid of his own size steerin' a cunnin' little rig an' four ponies up an' down Toledo, Ohio, I think 'twas, an' givin' suppers to a crowd o' sim'lar kids. Cur'us kind o' fairy tale, but blame interestin'. He knows scores of 'em.'

'Guess he strikes 'em outen his own head,' Disko called from the cabin, where he was busy with the log-book. 'Stands to reason that sort is all made up. It don't take in no one but Dan, an' he laughs at it. I've heard him, behind my back.'

'Y'ever hear what Sim'on Peter Ca'houn said when they whacked up a match 'twix' his sister Hitty an' Lorin' Jerauld, an' the boys put up that joke on him daown to Georges?' drawled Uncle Salters, who was dripping peaceably under the lee of the starboard dory-nest.

Tom Platt puffed at his pipe in scornful silence: he was a Cape Cod man, and had not known that tale more than twenty years. Uncle Salters went on with a rasping chuckle:

'Sim'on Peter Ca'houn he said, an' he was jest right, abaout Lorin', "Ha'af on the taown," he said, "an' t'other ha'af blame fool; an' they told me she's married a 'ich man." Sim'on Peter Ca'houn he hedn't no roof to his mouth, an' talked that way.'

'He didn't talk any Pennsylvania Dutch,' Tom Platt replied. 'You'd better leave a Cape man to tell that tale. The Ca'houns was gipsies from 'way back.'

'Wal, I don't profess to be any elocutionist,' Salters said. 'I'm comin' to the moral o' things. That's jest abaout what aour Harve be! Ha'af on the taown, an' t'other ha'af blame fool; an' there's some'll believe he's a rich man. Yah!'

'Did ye ever think how sweet 'twould be to sail wid a full crew o' Salterses?' said Long Jack. 'Ha'af in the furrer an' other ha'af in the muck-heap, as Ca'houn did not say, an' makes out he's a fisherman!'

A little laugh went round at Salters's expense.

Disko held his tongue and wrought over the log-book that he kept in a hatchet-faced, square hand; this was the kind of thing that ran on, page after soiled page:—

'17th July.— This day thick fog and few fish. Made berth to northward. So ends this day.

'18th July.— This day comes in with thick fog. Caught a few fish.

'19th July.— This day comes in with light breeze from N. E. and fine weather. Made a berth to eastward. Caught plenty fish.

'20th July.— This, the Sabbath, comes in with fog and light winds. So ends this day. Total fish caught this week, 3478.'

They never worked on Sundays, but shaved, and washed themselves if it were fine, and Pennsylvania sang hymns. Once or twice he suggested that, if it was not an impertinence, he thought he could preach a little. Uncle Salters nearly jumped down his throat at the mere notion, reminding him that he was not a preacher and mustn't think of such things. 'We'd hev him rememberin' Johnstown next,' Salters explained, 'an' what would happen then?' So they compromised on his reading aloud from a book called 'Josephus.' It was an old leather-bound volume, smelling of a hundred voyages, very solid and very like the Bible, but enlivened with accounts of battles and sieges; and they read it nearly from cover to cover. Otherwise Penn was a silent little body. He would not utter a word for three days on end sometimes, though he played checkers, listened to the songs, and laughed at the stories. When they tried to stir him up, he would answer: 'I don't wish to seem unneighbourly, but it is because I have nothing to say. My head feels quite empty. I've almost for-

gotten my name.' He would turn to Uncle Salters with an expectant smile.

'Why, Pennsylvania Pratt,' Salters would shout. 'You'll fergit me next.'

'No—never,' Penn would say, shutting his lips firmly. 'Pennsylvania Pratt, of course,' he would repeat over and over. Sometimes it was Uncle Salters who forgot, and told him he was Haskins or Rich or M'Vitty; but Penn was equally content—till next time.

He was always very tender with Harvey, whom he pitied both as a lost child and as a lunatic; and when Salters saw that Penn liked the boy, he relaxed too. Salters was not an amiable person (he esteemed it his business to keep the boys in order); and the first time Harvey, in fear and trembling, on a still day, managed to shin up to the main-truck (Dan was behind him ready to help), he esteemed it his duty to hang Salters's big sea-boots up there—a sight of shame and derision to the nearest schooner. With Disko, Harvey took no liberties; not even when the old man dropped direct orders, and treated him, like the rest of the crew, to 'Don't you want to do so and so?' and 'Guess you'd better,' and so forth. There was something about the clean-shaven lips and the puckered corners of the eyes that was mightily sobering to young blood.

Disko showed him the meaning of the thumbed and pricked Eldridge chart, which, he said, laid over any Government publication whatsoever; led him, pencil in hand, from berth to berth over the whole string of banks—Le Have, Western, Banquereau, St. Pierre, Green, and Grand—talking 'cod' meantime. Taught him, too, the principle on which the 'hog-yoke' was worked.

In this Harvey excelled Dan, for he had inherited a head for figures, and the notion of stealing information from one glimpse of the sullen Bank sun appealed to all his keen wits. In other sea-matters, his age handicapped him. As Disko said, he should have begun when he was ten. Dan could bait up trawl or lay his hand on any rope in the dark; and at a pinch, when Uncle Salters had a gurry-sore on his palm, could dress-down by sense of touch. He could steer in anything short of half a gale from the feel of the wind on his face, humouring the 'We're Here' just when she needed it. These things he did as automatically as he skipped about the rigging, or made his dory a part of his own will and body. But he could not communicate his knowledge to Harvey.

Still there was a good deal of general information flying about the schooner on stormy days, when they lay up in the foc'sle or sat on the cabin lockers, while spare eye-bolts, leads, and rings rolled and rattled in the pauses of the talk. Disko spoke of whaling voyages in the Fifties; of great she-whales slain beside their young; of death agonies on the black, tossing seas, and blood that spurted forty feet in the air; of boats smashed to splinters; of patent rockets that went off wrong-end-first and bombarded the trembling crews; of cutting-in and boiling-down, and of that terrible 'nip' of '71, when twelve hundred men were made homeless on the ice in three days—wonderful tales, all true. But more wonderful still were his stories of the cod, and how they argued and reasoned on their private businesses deep down below the keel.

Long Jack's tastes ran more to the supernatural. He held them silent with ghastly stories of the 'Yo-hoes'

on Monomoy Beach that mock and terrify lonely clam-diggers; of sand-walkers and dune-haunters who were never properly buried; of hidden treasure on Fire Island guarded by the spirits of Kidd's men; of ships that sailed in the fog straight over Truro township; of that harbour in Maine where no one but a stranger will lie at anchor twice in a certain place because of a dead crew who row alongside at midnight with the anchor in the bow of their old-fashioned boat, whistling—not calling, but whistling—for the soul of the man who broke their rest.

Harvey had a notion that the east coast of his native land, from Mount Desert south, was populated chiefly by people who took their horses there in the summer and entertained in country-houses with hardwood floors and Vantine portieres. He laughed at the ghost tales,—not as much as he would have done a month before,—but ended by sitting still and shuddering.

Tom Platt dealt with his interminable trip round the Horn on the old 'Ohio' in the flogging days; with a navy more extinct than the dodo—the navy that passed away in the great war. He told them how red-hot shot are dropped into a cannon, a wad of wet clay between them and the cartridge; how they sizzle and reek when they strike wood, and how the little ship-boys of the 'Miss Jim Buck' hove water over them and shouted to the fort to try again. And he told tales of blockade—long weeks of swaying at anchor, varied only by the departure and return of steamers that had used up their coal (there was no change for the sailing-ships); of gales and cold—cold that kept two hundred men, night and day, pounding and chopping at the ice on cable, blocks, and rigging, when the galley was as red-hot as the fort's

shot, and men drank cocoa by the bucket. Tom Platt had no use for steam. His service closed when that thing was comparatively new. He admitted that it was a specious invention in time of peace, but looked hopefully for the day when sails should come back again on ten-thousand-ton frigates with hundred-and-ninety-foot booms.

Manuel's talk was slow and gentle—all about pretty girls in Madeira washing clothes in the dry beds of streams, by moonlight, under waving bananas; legends of saints, and tales of queer dances or fights away in the cold Newfoundland baiting-ports. Salters was mainly agricultural, for, though he read Josephus and expounded it, his mission in life was to prove the value of green manures, and specially of clover, against every form of phosphate whatsoever. He grew libellous about phosphates; he dragged greasy 'Orange Judd' books from his bunk and intoned them, wagging his finger at Harvey, to whom it was all Greek. Little Penn was so genuinely pained when Harvey made fun of Salters's lectures that the boy gave it up, and suffered in polite silence. That was very good for Harvey.

The cook naturally did not join in these conversations. As a rule, he spoke only when it was absolutely necessary; but at times a queer gift of speech descended on him, and he held forth, half in Gaelic, half in broken English, an hour at a time. He was specially communicative with the boys, and he never withdrew his prophecy that one day Harvey would be Dan's master, and that he would see it. He told them of mail-carrying in the winter up Cape Breton way, of the dog-train that goes to Coudray, and of the ram-steamer 'Arctic' that breaks the ice between the mainland and Prince

Edward Island. Then he told them stories that his mother had told him, of life far to the southward where water never froze; and he said that when he died his soul would go to lie down on a warm white beach of sand with palm-trees waving above. That seemed to the boys a very odd idea for a man who had never seen a palm in his life. Then, too, regularly at each meal, he would ask Harvey, and Harvey alone, whether the cooking was to his taste; and this always made the 'second half' laugh. Yet they had a great respect for the cook's judgment, and in their hearts considered Harvey something of a mascot by consequence.

And while Harvey was taking in knowledge of new things at each pore and hard health with every gulp of the good air, the 'We're Here' went her ways and did her business on the Bank, and the silvery-gray kenches of well-pressed fish mounted higher and higher in the hold. No one day's work was out of the common, but the average days were many and close together.

Naturally a man of Disko's reputation was closely watched—'scrowged upon,' Dan called it—by his neighbours, but he had a very pretty knack of giving them the slip through the curdling, glidy fog-banks. Disko avoided company for two reasons. He wished to make his own experiments, in the first place; in the second, he objected to the mixed gatherings of a fleet of all nations. The bulk of them were mainly Gloucester boats, with a scattering from Provincetown, Harwich, Chatham, and some of the Maine ports, but the crews drew from goodness knows where. Risk breeds recklessness, and when greed is added, there are fine chances for every kind of accident in the crowded fleet, which, like a mob of sheep, is huddled round some un-

recognised leader. 'Let the two Jeraulds lead 'em,' said Disko. 'We're baound to lay among 'em fer a spell on the Eastern Shoals, though, ef luck holds, we won't hev to lay long. Where we are naow, Harve, ain't considered noways good graound.'

'Ain't it?' said Harvey, who was drawing water (he had learned just how to wiggle the bucket properly), after an unusually long dressing-down. 'Shouldn't mind striking some poor ground for a change, then.'

'All the graound I want to see—don't want to strike her—is Eastern Point,' said Dan. 'Say, dad, it looks's if we wouldn't hev to lay more'n two weeks on the Shoals. You'll meet all the comp'ny you want then, Harve. That's the time we begin to work. No reg'lar meals fer no one then. 'Mug-up when ye're hungry, an' sleep when ye can't keep awake. Good job you wasn't picked up a month later than you was, or we'd never ha' had you dressed in shape fer the Old Virgin.'

Harvey understood from the Eldridge chart that the Old Virgin and a nest of curiously-named shoals were the turning-point of the cruise, and that with good luck they would wet the balance of their salt there; but seeing the size of the Virgin (it was one tiny dot), he wondered how even Disko with the hog-yoke and the lead could find her. He learned later that Disko was entirely equal to that and any other business, and could even help others. A big four-by-five blackboard hung in the cabin, and Harvey never understood the need of it till, after some blinding thick days, they heard the unmelodious tooting of a foot-power fog-horn—a machine whose note is that of a consumptive elephant.

They were making a short berth, towing the anchor under their foot to save trouble. 'Square-rigger bel-

lowin' fer his latitude,' said Long Jack. The dripping red headsails of a bark glided out of the fog, and the 'We're Here' rang her bell thrice, using sea shorthand.

The larger boat backed her topsail, with shrieks and shoutings.

'Frenchman,' said Uncle Salters scornfully. 'Miquelon boat from St. Malo.' The farmer had a weatherly sea-eye. 'I'm most outer 'baccy, too, Disko.'

'Same here,' said Tom Platt. 'Hi! backez vous—backez vous! Standez awayez, you butt-ended mucho bono! Where you from—St. Malo, eh?'

'Ah, ha! mucho bono! Oui! oui! Clos Poulet—St. Malo! St. Pierre et Miquelon,' cried the other crowd, waving woollen caps and laughing. Then all together, 'Bord! Bord!'

'Bring up the board, Danny. Beats me how them Frenchmen fetch anywheres, exceptin' America's fairish broadly. Forty-six Forty-nine's good enough fer them; an' I guess it's abaout right, too.'

Dan chalked the figures on the board, and they hung it in the main-rigging to a chorus of 'Mercis' from the bark.

'Seems kinder unneighbourly to let 'em swedge off like this,' Salters suggested, feeling in his pockets.

'Hev ye learned French then sence last trip?' said Disko. 'I don't want no more stone-ballast hove at us 'long o' your callin' Miquelon boats "footy cochins" same's you did off Le Have.'

'Harmon Rush he said that was the way to rise 'em. Plain United States is good enough fer me. We're all dretful short on terbakker. Young feller, don't you speak French?'

'Oh, yes,' said Harvey valiantly; and he bawled: 'Hi!

Say! Arretez-vous! Attendez! Nous sommes venant pour tabac.'

'Ah, tabac, tabac!' they cried, and laughed again.

'That hit 'em. Let's heave a dory over, anyway,' said Tom Platt. 'I don't exactly hold no certificates on French, but I know another lingo that goes, I guess. Come on, Harve, an' interprut.'

The raffle and confusion when he and Harvey were hauled up the bark's black side was indescribable. Her cabin was all stuck round with glaring coloured prints of the Virgin—the Virgin of Newfoundland, they called her. Harvey found his French of no recognised Bank brand, and his conversation was limited to nods and grins. But Tom Platt waved his arms and got along swimmingly. The captain gave him a drink of unspeakable gin, and the opera-comique crew, with their hairy throats, red caps, and long knives, greeted him as a brother. Then the trade began. They had tobacco, plenty of it—American, that had never paid duty to France. They wanted chocolate and crackers. Harvey rowed back to arrange with the cook and Disko, who owned the stores, and on his return the cocoa-tins and cracker-bags were counted out by the Frenchman's wheel. It looked like a piratical division of loot; but Tom Platt came out of it roped with black pig-tail and stuffed with cakes of chewing and smoking tobacco. Then those jovial mariners swung off into the mist, and the last Harvey heard was a gay chorus:

'Par derriere chez ma tante,
Il y a un bois joli,
Et le rossignol y chante
Et le jour et la nuit . . .

Que donneriez-vous, belle,
Qui l'amenerait ici?
Je donnerai Quebec,
Sorel et Saint Denis.'

'How was it my French didn't go, and your sign-talk did?' Harvey demanded when the barter had been distributed among the 'We're Heres.'

'Sign-talk!' Platt guffawed. 'Well, yes, 'twas sign-talk, but a heap older'n your French, Harve. Them French boats are chock-full o' Freemasons, an' that's why.'

'Are you a Freemason, then?'

'Looks that way, don't it?' said the man-o'-war's man, stuffing his pipe; and Harvey had another mystery of the deep sea to brood upon.

CHAPTER VI

THE thing that struck him most was the exceedingly casual way in which some craft loafed about the broad Atlantic. Fishing-boats, as Dan said, were naturally dependent on the courtesy and wisdom of their neighbours; but one expected better things of steamers. That was after another interesting interview, when they had been chased for three miles by a big lumbering old cattle-boat, all boarded over on the upper deck, that smelt like a thousand cattle-pens. A very excited officer yelled at them through a speaking-trumpet, and she lay and lollopped helplessly on the water while Disko ran the 'We're Here' under her lee and gave the skipper a piece of his mind. 'Where might ye be—eh? Ye don't deserve to be anywheres. You barn-yard tramps go hoggin' the road on the high seas with no blame consideration fer your neighbours, an' your eyes in your coffee-cups instid o' in your silly heads.'

At this the skipper danced on the bridge and said something about Disko's own eyes. 'We haven't had an observation for three days. D'you suppose we can run her blind?' he shouted.

'Wa-al, I can,' Disko retorted. 'What's come to your lead? Et it? Can't ye smell bottom, or are them cattle too rank?'

'What d'ye feed 'em?' said Uncle Salters with intense seriousness, for the smell of the pens woke all the farmer in him. 'They say they fall off dretful on a v'yage. Dunno as it's any o' my business, but I've a kind o' notion that oil-cake broke small an' sprinkled—'

'Thunder!' said a cattle-man in a red jersey as he looked over the side. 'What asylum did they let His Whiskers out of?'

'Young feller,' Salters began, standing up in the fore-rigging, 'let me tell yeou 'fore we go any further that I've—'

The officer on the bridge took off his cap with immense politeness. 'Excuse me,' he said, 'but I've asked for my reckoning. If the agricultural person with the hair will kindly shut his head, the sea-green barnacle with the wall eye may per-haps condescend to enlighten us.'

'Naow you've made a show o' me, Salters,' said Disko angrily. He could not stand up to that particular sort of talk, and snapped out the latitude and longitude without more lectures.

'Well, that's a boat-load of lunatics, sure,' said the skipper, as he rang up the engine-room and tossed a bundle of newspapers into the schooner.

'Of all the blamed fools, next to you, Salters, him an' his crowd are abaout the likeliest I've ever seen,' said Disko as the 'We're Here' slid away. 'I was jest givin' him my jedgment on lullsikin' round these waters like a lost child, an' you must cut in with your fool farmin'. Can't ye never keep things sep'rate?'

Harvey, Dan, and the others stood back, winking one to the other and full of joy; but Disko and Salters wrangled seriously till evening, Salters arguing that a

cattle-boat was practically a barn on blue water, and Disko insisting that, even if this were the case, decency and fisher pride demanded that he should have kept 'things sep'rate.' Long Jack stood it in silence for a time—an angry skipper makes an unhappy crew—and then he spoke across the table after supper:

'Fwhat's the good o' bodderin' fwhat they'll say?' said he.

'They'll tell that tale agin us fer years—that's all,' said Disko. 'Oil-cake sprinkled!'

'With salt, o' course,' said Salters, impenitent, reading the farming reports from a week-old New York paper.

'It's plumb mortifyin' to all my feelin's,' the skipper went on.

'Can't see ut that way,' said Long Jack, the peacemaker. 'Look at here, Disko! Is there another packet afloat this day in this weather cud ha' met a tramp an', over an' above givin' her her reckonin',—over an' above that, I say,—cud ha' discoorsed wid her quite intelligent on the management av steers an' such at sea? Forgit ut! Av coorse they will not. 'Twas the most compenjus conversation that iver accrued. Double game an' twice runnin'—all to us.' Dan kicked Harvey under the table, and Harvey choked in his cup.

'Well,' said Salters, who felt that his honour had been somewhat plastered, 'I said I didn't know as 'twuz any business o' mine, 'fore I spoke.'

'An' right there,' said Tom Platt, experienced in discipline and etiquette—'right there, I take it, Disko, you should ha' asked him to stop ef the conversation wuz likely, in your jedgment, to be anyways—what it shouldn't.'

'Dunno but that's so,' said Disko, who saw his way to an honourable retreat from a fit of the dignities.

'Why, o' course it was so,' said Salters, 'you bein' skipper here; an' I'd cheerful hev stopped on a hint—not from any leadin' or conviction, but fer the sake o' bearin' an example to these two blame boys of aours.'

'Didn't I tell you, Harve, 'twould come araound to us 'fore we'd done? Always those blame boys. But I wouldn't have missed the show fer a half-share in a halibutter,' Dan whispered.

'Still, things should ha' been kep' sep'rate,' said Disko, and the light of new argument lit in Salters's eye as he crumbled cut plug into his pipe.

'There's a power av vartue in keepin' things sep'rate,' said Long Jack, intent on stilling the storm. 'That's fwhat Steyning of Steyning and Hare's f'und when he sent Counahan fer skipper on the "Marilla D. Kuhn," instid o' Cap. Newton that was took with inflam'try rheumatism, an' couldn't go. Counahan the Navigator we called him.'

'Nick Counahan he never went aboard fer a night 'thout a pond o' rum somewheres in the manifest,' said Tom Platt, playing up to the lead. 'He used to bum araound the c'mission houses to Boston lookin' fer the Lord to make him captain of a tow-boat on his merits. Sam Coy, up to Atlantic Avenoo, give him his board free fer a year or more on account of his stories. Counahan the Navigator! Tck! Tck! Dead these fifteen years, ain't he?'

'Seventeen, I guess,' said Long Jack. 'He died the year the "Caspar M'Veagh" was built; but he could niver keep things sep'rate. Steyning tuk him fer the reason the thief tuk the hot stove—bekaze there was

nothin' else that season. The men was all to the Banks, and Counahan he whacked up an iverlastin' hard crowd fer crew. Rum! Ye cud ha' floated the "Marilla," insurance an' all, in fwhat they stowed aboard her. They lef' Boston Harbour for the great Grand Bank wid a roarin' nor'wester behind 'em an' all hands full to the bung. An' the hivens looked after thim, for divil a watch did they set, an' divil a rope did they lay hand to, till they'd seen the bottom av a fifteen-gallon cask o' bug-juice. That was about wan week, so far as Counahan remembered. (If I cud only tell the tale as he told ut!) All that whoile the wind blew like ould glory, an' the "Marilla"—'twas summer, and they'd give her a fore-topmast—struck her gait and kept ut. Then Counahan tuk the hog-yoke an' thrembled over it for a whoile, an' made out, betwix' that an' the chart an' the singin' in his head, that they was to the south'ard o' Sable Island, gettin' along glorious; but speakin' nothin'. Then they broached another keg, an' quit speculatin' about anythin' fer another spell. The "Marilla" she lay down whin she dropped Boston Light, and she never lufted her lee-rail up to that time—hustlin' on one an' the same slant. But they saw no weed, nor gulls, nor schooners; an' prisintly they obsarved they'd bin out a matter o' fourteen days, and they mistrusted the Bank had suspinded payment. So they sounded, an' got sixty fathom. "That's me," sez Counahan. "That's me iv'ry time! I've run her slap on the Bank fer you, an' when we get thirty fathom we'll turn in like little men. Counahan is the b'y," sez he. "Counahan the Navigator!"

'Nex' cast they got ninety. Sez Counahan: "Either the lead-line's tuk to stretchin' or else the Bank's sunk."

'They hauled ut up, bein' just about in that state when ut seemed right an' reasonable, and sat down on the deck countin' the knots, an' gettin' her snarled up hijjus. The "Marilla," she'd struck her gait, an' she hild ut, an' prisintly along come a tramp, an' Counahan spoke her.

' "Hev ye seen any fishin'-boats now?" sez he, quite casual.

' "There's lashin's av them off the Irish coast," sez the tramp.

' "Aah! go shake yerself," sez Counahan. "Fwhat have I to do wid the Irish coast?"

' "Then fwhat are ye doin' here?" sez the tramp.

' "Sufferin' Christianity!" sez Counahan (he always said that whin his pumps sucked, an' he was not feelin' good)—"Sufferin' Christianity!" he sez, "where am I at?"

' "Thirty-five mile west-sou'west o' Cape Clear," sez the tramp, "if that's any consolation to you."

'Counahan fetched wan jump, four feet sivin inches, measured by the cook.

' "Consolation!" sez he, bould as brass. "D'ye take me fer a dialect? Thirty-five mile from Cape Clear, an' fourteen days from Boston Light. Sufferin' Christianity, 'tis a record, an' by the same token I've a mother to Skibbereen!" Think av ut! The gall av um! But ye see he could niver keep things sep'rate.

'The crew was mostly Cork an' Kerry men, barrin' one Marylander that wanted to go back, but they called him a mutineer, an' they ran the ould "Marilla" into Skibbereen, an' they had an illigant time visitin' around with frinds on the ould sod fer a week. Thin they wint back, an' it cost 'em two-an'-thirty days to beat to the

Banks again. 'Twas gettin' on towards fall, and grub was low, so Counahan ran her back to Boston, wid no more bones to ut.'

'And what did the firm say?' Harvey demanded.

'Fwhat could they? The fish was on the Banks, an' Counahan was at T-wharf talkin' av his record trip, east! They tuk their satisfaction out av that, an' ut all came av not keepin' the crew and the rum sep'rate in the first place; an' confusin' Skibbereen wid 'Queereau, in the second. Counahan the Navigator, rest his sowl! He was an imprompju citizen!'

'Once I was in the "Lucy Holmes,"' said Manuel, in his gentle voice. 'They not want any of her feesh in Gloucester. Eh, wha-at? Give us no price. So we go across the water, and think to sell to some Fayal man. Then it blow fresh, and we cannot see well. Eh, wha-at? Then it blow some more fresh, and we go down below and drive very fast—no one know where. By and by we see a land, and it get some hot. Then come two, three nigger in a brick. Eh, wha-at? We ask where we are, and they say—now, what you all think?'

'Grand Canary,' said Disko, after a moment. Manuel shook his head, smiling.

'Blanco,' said Tom Platt.

'No. Worse than that. We was below Bezagos, and the brick she was from Liberia! So we sell our feesh there! Not bad, so? Eh, wha-at?'

'Can a schooner like this go right across to Africa?' said Harvey.

'Go araound the Horn ef there's anythin' worth goin' fer, and the grub holds aout,' said Disko. 'My father he run his packet, an' she was a kind o' pinkey, abaout fifty ton, I guess,—the "Rupert,"—he run her over to

Greenland's icy mountains the year ha'af our fleet was tryin' after cod there. An' what's more, he took my mother along with him,—to show her haow the money was earned, I presoom,—an' they was all iced up, an' I was born at Disko. Don't remember nothin' abaout it, o' course. We come back when the ice eased in the spring, but they named me fer the place. Kinder mean trick to put up on a baby, but we're all baound to make mistakes in aour lives.'

'Sure! Sure!' said Salters, wagging his head. 'All baound to make mistakes, an' I tell you two boys here thet after you've made a mistake—ye don't make fewer 'n a hundred a day—the next best thing's to own up to it, like men.'

Long Jack winked one tremendous wink that embraced all hands except Disko and Salters, and the incident was closed.

Then they made berth after berth to the northward, the dories out almost every day, running along the east edge of the Grand Bank in thirty to forty fathom water, and fishing steadily.

It was here Harvey first met the squid, who is one of the best cod-baits, but uncertain in his moods. They were waked out of their bunks one black night by yells of 'Squid O!' from Salters, and for an hour and a half every soul aboard hung over his squid-jig—a piece of lead painted red and armed at the lower end with a circle of pins bent backward like half-opened umbrella ribs. The squid—for some unknown reason—likes, and wraps himself round, this thing, and is hauled up ere he can escape from the pins. But as he leaves his home, he squirts first water and next ink into his captor's face; and it was curious to see the men waving their

heads from side to side, to dodge the shot. They were as black as sweeps when the flurry ended; but a pile of fresh squid lay on the deck, and the larger cod thinks very well of a little shiny piece of squid-tentacle at the tip of a clam-baited hook. Next day they caught many fish, and met the 'Carrie Pitman,' to whom they shouted their luck, and she wanted to trade—seven cod for one fair-sized squid; but Disko would not agree at the price, and the 'Carrie' dropped sullenly to leeward and anchored half a mile away, in the hope of striking on to some for herself.

Disko said nothing till after supper, when he sent Dan and Manuel out to buoy the 'We're Here's' cable and announced his intention of turning in with the broad-axe. Dan naturally repeated these remarks to a dory from the 'Carrie,' who wanted to know why they were buoying their cable, since they were not on rocky bottom.

'Dad sez he wouldn't trust a ferryboat within five mile o' you,' Dan howled cheerfully.

'Why don't he git out, then? Who's hinderin'?' said the other.

'Cause you've jest the same ez lee-bowed him, an' he don't take that from any boat, not to speak o' sech a driftin' gurry-butt as you be.'

'She ain't driftin' any this trip,' said the man angrily, for the 'Carrie Pitman' had an unsavoury reputation for breaking her ground-tackle.

'Then haow d'you make berths?' said Dan. 'It's her best p'int o' sailin'. An' ef she's quit driftin', what in thunder are you doin' with a new jib-boom?' That shot went home.

'Hey, you Portugoosy organ-grinder, take your mon-

key back to Gloucester. Go back to school, Dan Troop,' was the answer.

'O-ver-alls! O-ver-alls!' yelled Dan, who knew that one of the 'Carrie's' crew had worked in an overall factory the winter before.

'Shrimp! Gloucester shrimp! Git aout, you Novy!'

To call a Gloucester man a Nova Scotian is not well received. Dan answered in kind.

'Novy yourself, ye Scrabble-towners—ye Chatham wreckers! Get aout with your brick in your stockin'!' And the forces separated, but Chatham had the worst of it.

'I knew haow 'twould be,' said Disko. 'She's drawed the wind raound already. Some one oughter put a dee-sist on thet packet. She'll snore till midnight an' jest when we're gittin' our sleep she'll strike adrift. Good job we ain't crowded with craft hereaways. But I ain't goin' to up anchor fer Chatham. She may hold.'

The wind, which had hauled round, rose at sundown and blew steadily. There was not enough sea, though, to disturb even a dory's tackle, but the 'Carrie Pitman' was a law unto herself. At the end of the boys' watch they heard the 'crack-crack-crack' of a huge muzzle-loading revolver aboard her.

'Glory, glory, hallelujah!' sang Dan. 'Here she comes, dad; butt-end first, walkin' in her sleep same's she done on 'Queereau.'

Had she been any other boat Disko would have taken his chances, but now he cut the cable as the 'Carrie Pitman,' with all the North Atlantic to play in, lurched down directly upon them. The 'We're Here,' under jib and riding-sail, gave her no more room than was absolutely necessary,—Disko did not wish to spend a

week hunting for his cable,—but scuttled up into the wind as the 'Carrie' passed within easy hail, a silent and angry boat, at the mercy of a raking broadside of Bank chaff.

'Good evenin',' said Disko, raising his headgear, 'an' haow does your garden grow?'

'Go to Ohio an' hire a mule,' said Uncle Salters. 'We don't want no farmers here.'

'Will I lend you my dory-anchor?' cried Long Jack.

'Unship your rudder an' stick it in the mud,' said Tom Platt.

'Say!' Dan's voice rose shrill and high as he stood on the wheel-box. 'Sa-ay! Is there a strike in the o-ver-all factory; or hev they hired girls, ye Shackamaxons?'

'Veer out the tiller-lines,' cried Harvey, 'and nail 'em to the bottom.' That was a salt-flavoured jest he had been put up to by Tom Platt. Manuel leaned over the stern and yelled, 'Johnna Morgan play the organ! Ahaaaa!' He flourished his broad thumb with a gesture of unspeakable contempt and derision, while little Penn covered himself with glory by piping up: 'Gee a little. Hssh! Come here. Haw!'

They rode on their chain for the rest of the night, a short, snappy, uneasy motion, as Harvey found, and wasted half the forenoon recovering the cable. But the boys agreed the trouble was cheap at the price of triumph and glory, and they thought with grief over all the beautiful things that they might have said to the discomfited 'Carrie.'

CHAPTER VII

NEXT day they fell in with more sails, all circling slowly from the east northerly towards the west. But just when they expected to make the shoals by the Virgin the fog shut down, and they anchored, surrounded by the tinklings of invisible bells. There was not much fishing, but occasionally dory met dory in the fog and exchanged news.

That night, a little before dawn, Dan and Harvey, who had been sleeping most of the day, tumbled out to 'hook' fried pies. There was no reason why they should not have taken them openly; but they tasted better so, and it made the cook angry. The heat and smell below drove them on deck with their plunder, and they found Disko at the bell, which he handed over to Harvey.

'Keep her goin',' said he. 'I mistrust I hear somethin'. Ef it's anything, I'm best where I am so's to get at things.'

It was a forlorn little jingle; the thick air seemed to pinch it off; and in the pauses Harvey heard the muffled shriek of a liner's siren, and he knew enough of the Banks now to know what that meant. It came to him, with horrible distinctness, how a boy in a cherry-coloured jersey—he despised fancy blazers now with all a fisherman's contempt—how an ignorant, rowdy boy had once said it would be 'great' if a steamer ran down

a fishing-boat. That boy had a state-room with a hot and cold bath, and spent ten minutes each morning picking over a gilt-edged bill of fare. And that same boy—no, his very much older brother—was up at four of the dim dawn in streaming, crackling oilskins, hammering, literally for the dear life, on a bell smaller than the steward's breakfast bell, while somewhere close at hand a thirty-foot steel stem was storming along at twenty miles an hour! The bitterest thought of all was that there were folks asleep in dry, upholstered cabins who would never learn that they had massacred a boat before breakfast. So Harvey rang the bell.

'Yes, they slow daown one turn o' their blame propeller,' said Dan, applying himself to Manuel's conch, 'fer to keep inside the law, an' that's consolin' when we're all at the bottom. Hark to her! She's a humper!'

'Aoooo—whoooo—whupp!' went the siren. 'Wingle—tingle—tink,' went the bell. 'Graaa—ouch!' went the conch, while sea and sky were all milled up in milky fog. Then Harvey felt that he was near a moving body, and found himself looking up and up at the wet edge of a cliff-like bow, leaping, it seemed, directly over the schooner. A jaunty little feather of water curled in front of it, and as it lifted it showed a long ladder of Roman numerals—XV. XVI. XVII. XVIII. and so forth—on a salmon-coloured, gleaming side. It tilted forward and downward with a heart-stilling 'Ssssooo'; the ladder disappeared; a line of brass-rimmed portholes flashed past; a jet of steam puffed in Harvey's helplessly uplifted hands; a spout of hot water roared along the rail of the 'We're Here,' and the little schooner staggered and shook in a rush of screw-torn water, as a liner's stern vanished in the fog. Harvey got ready to

faint or be sick, or both, when he heard a crack like a trunk thrown on a sidewalk, and, all small in his ear, a far-away telephone voice drawling: 'Heave to! You've sunk us!'

'Is it us?' he gasped.

'No! Boat out yonder. Ring! We're goin' to look,' said Dan, running out a dory.

In half a minute all except Harvey, Penn, and the cook were over-side and away. Presently a schooner's stump-foremast, snapped clean across, drifted past the bows. Then an empty green dory came by, knocking on the 'We're Here's' side, as though she wished to be taken up. Then followed something, face down, in a blue jersey, but—it was not the whole of a man. Penn changed colour and caught his breath with a click. Harvey pounded despairingly at the bell, for he feared they might be sunk at any minute, and he jumped at Dan's hail as the crew came back.

'The "Jennie Cushman,"' said Dan hysterically, 'cut clean in half—graound up an' trompled on at that! Not a quarter of a mile away. Dad's got the old man. There ain't any one else, and—there was his son too. Oh, Harve, Harve, I can't stand it! I've seen—' He dropped his head on his arms and sobbed while the others dragged a gray-headed man aboard.

'What did you pick me up for?' the stranger groaned. 'Disko, what did you pick me up for?'

Disko dropped a heavy hand on his shoulder, for the man's eyes were wild and his lips trembled as he stared at the silent crew. Then up and spoke Pennsylvania Pratt, who was also Haskins or Rich or M'Vitty when Uncle Salters forgot; and his face was changed on him from the face of a fool to the countenance of an old, wise

man, and he said in a strong voice: 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord! I was—I am a minister of the Gospel. Leave him to me.'

'Oh, you be, be you?' said the man. 'Then pray my son back to me! Pray back a nine-thousand-dollar boat an' a thousand quintal of fish. If you'd left me alone my widow could ha' gone on to the Provident an' worked fer her board, an' never known—an' never known. Now I'll hev to tell her.'

'There ain't nothin' to say,' said Disko. 'Better lie down a piece, Jason Olley.'

When a man has lost his only son, his summer's work, and his means of livelihood, in thirty counted seconds, it is hard to give consolation.

'All Gloucester men, wasn't they?' said Tom Platt, fiddling helplessly with a dory-becket.

'Oh, that don't make no odds,' said Jason, wringing the wet from his beard. 'I'll be rowin' summer boarders araound East Gloucester this fall.' He rolled heavily to the rail, singing:

'Happy birds that sing and fly
Round thine altars, O Most High!'

'Come with me. Come below!' said Penn, as though he had a right to give orders. Their eyes met and fought for a quarter of a minute.

'I dunno who you be, but I'll come,' said Jason submissively. 'Mebbe I'll get back some o' the—some o' the—nine thousand dollars.' Penn led him into the cabin and slid the door behind.

'That ain't Penn,' cried Uncle Salters. 'It's Jacob

Boller, an'—he's remembered Johnstown! I never seed such eyes in any livin' man's head. What's to do naow? What'll I do naow?'

They could hear Penn's voice and Jason's together. Then Penn's went on alone, and Salters slipped off his hat, for Penn was praying. Presently the little man came up the steps, huge drops of sweat on his face, and looked at the crew. Dan was still sobbing by the wheel.

'He don't know us,' Salters groaned. 'It's all to do over again, checkers and everything—an' what'll he say to me?'

Penn spoke; they could hear that it was to strangers. 'I have prayed,' said he. 'Our people believe in prayer. I have prayed for the life of this man's son. Mine were drowned before my eyes, she and my eldest and—the others. Shall a man be more wise than his Maker? I prayed never for their lives, but I have prayed for this man's son, and he will surely be sent him.'

Salters looked pleadingly at Penn to see if he remembered.

'How long have I been mad?' Penn asked suddenly. His mouth was twitching.

'Pshaw, Penn! You weren't never mad,' Salters began. 'Only a little distracted like.'

'I saw the houses strike the bridge before the fires broke out. I do not remember any more. How long ago is that?'

'I can't stand it! I can't stand it!' cried Dan, and Harvey whimpered in sympathy.

'Abaout five year,' said Disko, in a shaking voice.

'Then I have been a charge on some one for every day of that time. Who was the man?'

Disko pointed to Salters.

'Ye hain't—ye hain't!' cried the sea-farmer, twisting his hands together. 'Ye've more'n earned your keep twice-told; an' there's money owin' you, Penn, besides ha'af o' my quarter-share in the boat, which is yours fer value received.'

'You are good men. I can see that in your faces. But—'

'Mother av Mercy,' whispered Long Jack, 'an' he's been wid us all these trips! He's clean bewitched.'

A schooner's bell struck up alongside, and a voice hailed through the fog: 'O Disko! Heard abaout the "Jennie Cushman"?'

'They have found his son,' cried Penn. 'Stand you still and see the salvation of the Lord!'

'Got Jason aboard here,' Disko answered, but his voice quavered. 'There—warn't any one else?'

'We've f'und one, though. Run acrost him snarled up in a mess o' lumber thet might ha' bin a foc'sle. His head's cut some.'

'Who is he?'

The 'We're Heres' heart-beats answered one another.

'Guess it's young Olley,' the voice drawled.

Penn raised his hands and said something in German. Harvey could have sworn that a bright sun was shining upon his lifted face; but the drawl went on. 'Sa-ay! You fellers guyed us consid'rable t'other night.'

'We don't feel like guyin' any now,' said Disko.

'I know it; but to tell the honest truth we was kinder —kinder driftin' when we run agin young Olley.'

It was the irrepressible 'Carrie Pitman,' and a roar of unsteady laughter went up from the deck of the 'We're Here.'

'Hedn't you 'baout's well send the old man aboard?

We're runnin' in fer more bait an' graound-tackle. Guess you won't want him, anyway, an' this blame windlass work makes us short-handed. We'll take care of him. He married my woman's aunt.'

'I'll give you anything in the boat,' said Troop.

'Don't want nothin', 'less, mebbe, an anchor that'll hold. Say! Young Olley's gittin' kinder baulky an' excited. Send the old man along.'

Penn waked him from his stupor of despair, and Tom Platt rowed him over. He went away without a word of thanks, not knowing what was to come; and the fog closed over all.

'And now,' said Penn, drawing a deep breath as though about to preach. 'And now'—the erect body sank like a sword driven home into the scabbard; the light faded from the over-bright eyes; the voice returned to its usual pitiful little titter—'and now,' said Pennsylvania Pratt, 'do you think it's too early for a little game of checkers Mr. Salters?'

'The very thing—the very thing I was goin' to say myself,' cried Salters promptly. 'It beats all, Penn, how ye git on to what's in a man's mind.'

The little fellow blushed and meekly followed Salters forward.

'Up anchor! Hurry! Let's quit these crazy waters,' shouted Disko, and never was he more swiftly obeyed.

'Now what in creation d'ye suppose is the meanin' o' that all?' said Long Jack, when they were working through the fog once more, damp, dripping, and bewildered.

'The way I sense it,' said Disko, at the wheel, 'is this: The "Jennie Cushman" business comin' on an empty stummick—'

'He—we saw one of them go by,' sobbed Harvey.

'An that, o' course, kinder hove him outer water, julluk runnin' a craft ashore; hove him right aout, I take it, to rememberin' Johnstown an' Jacob Boller an' such-like reminiscences. Well, consolin' Jason there held him up a piece, same's shorin' up a boat. Then, bein' weak, them props slipped an' slipped, an' he slided down the ways, an' naow he's water-borne agin. That's haow I sense it.'

They decided that Disko was entirely correct.

''Twould ha' bruk Salters all up,' said Long Jack, 'if Penn had stayed Jacob Bollerin'. Did ye see his face when Penn asked who he'd been charged on all these years? How is ut, Salters?'

'Asleep—dead asleep. Turned in like a child,' Salters replied, tiptoeing aft. 'There won't be no grub till he wakes, natural. Did ye ever see sech a gift in prayer? He everlastin'ly hiked young Olley outer the ocean. Thet's my belief. Jason was tur'ble praoud of his boy, an' I mistrusted all along 'twas a jedgment on worshippin' vain idols.'

'There's others jest as sot,' said Disko.

'That's diff'runt,' Salters retorted quickly. 'Penn's not all caulked, an' I ain't only but doin' my duty by him.'

They waited, those hungry men, three hours, till Penn reappeared with a smooth face and a blank mind. He said he believed that he had been dreaming. Then he wanted to know why they were so silent, and they could not tell him.

Disko worked all hands mercilessly for the next three or four days; and when they could not go out, turned them into the hold to stack the ship's stores into smaller

compass, to make more room for the fish. The packed mass ran from the cabin partition to the sliding door behind the foc'sle stove; and Disko showed how there is great art in stowing cargo so as to bring a schooner to her best draught. The crew were thus kept lively till they recovered their spirits; and Harvey was tickled with a rope's end by Long Jack for being, as the Galway man said, 'sorrowful as a sick cat over fwhat couldn't be helped.' He did a great deal of thinking in those dreary days; and told Dan what he thought, and Dan agreed with him—even to the extent of asking for fried pies instead of hooking them.

But a week later the two nearly upset the 'Hattie S.' in a wild attempt to stab a shark with an old bayonet tied to a stick. The grim brute rubbed alongside the dory begging for small fish, and between the three of them it was a mercy they all got off alive.

At last, after playing blind man's buff in the fog, there came a morning when Disko shouted down the foc'sle: 'Hurry, boys! We're in taown!'

CHAPTER VIII

TO the end of his days, Harvey will never forget that sight. The sun was just clear of the horizon they had not seen for nearly a week, and his low red light struck into the riding-sails of three fleets of anchored schooners—one to the north, one to the westward, and one to the south. There must have been nearly a hundred of them, of every possible make and build, with, far away, a square-rigged Frenchman, all bowing and curtseying one to the other. From every boat dories were dropping away like bees from a crowded hive; and the clamour of voices, the rattling of ropes and blocks, and the splash of the oars carried for miles across the heaving water. The sails turned all colours, black, pearly-gray, and white, as the sun mounted; and more boats swung up through the mists to the southward.

The dories gathered in clusters, separated, re-formed, and broke again, all heading one way; while men hailed and whistled and cat-called and sang, and the water was speckled with rubbish thrown overboard.

'It's a town,' said Harvey. 'Disko was right. It is a town!'

'I've seen smaller,' said Disko. 'There's about a thousand men here; an' yonder's the Virgin.' He pointed to a vacant space of greenish sea where there were no dories.

The 'We're Here' skirted round the northern squadron, Disko waving his hand to friend after friend, and anchored as neatly as a racing yacht at the end of the season. The Bank fleet pass good seamanship in silence; but a bungler is jeered all along the line.

'Jest in time fer the caplin,' cried the 'Mary Chilton.'

'Salt 'most wet?' asked the 'King Philip.'

'Hey, Tom Platt! Come t' supper to-night?' said the 'Henry Clay'; and so questions and answers flew back and forth. Men had met one another before, dory-fishing in the fog, and there is no place for gossip like the Bank fleet. They all seemed to know about Harvey's rescue, and asked if he were worth his salt yet. The young bloods jested with Dan, who had a lively tongue of his own and inquired after their health by the town-nicknames they least liked. Manuel's countrymen jabbered at him in their own language; and even the silent cook was seen riding the jib-boom and shouting Gaelic to a friend as black as himself. After they had buoyed the cable—all around the Virgin is rocky bottom, and carelessness means chafed ground-tackle and danger from drifting—after they had buoyed the cable, their dories went forth to join the mob of boats anchored about a mile away. The schooners rocked and dipped at a safe distance, like mother ducks watching their brood, while the dories behaved like mannerless ducklings.

As they drove into the confusion, boat banging boat, Harvey's ears tingled at the comments on his rowing. Every dialect from Labrador to Long Island, with Portuguese, Neapolitan, Lingua Franca, French, and Gaelic, with songs and shoutings and new oaths, rattled round him, and he seemed to be the butt of it all. For the first time in his life he felt shy—perhaps that came

from living so long with only the 'We're Heres'—among the scores of wild faces that rose and fell with the reeling small craft. A gentle, breathing swell, three furlongs from trough to barrel, would quietly shoulder up a string of variously painted dories. They hung for an instant, a wonderful frieze against the sky-line, and their men pointed and hailed. Next moment the open mouths, waving arms, and bare chests disappeared, while on another swell came up an entirely new line of characters like paper figures in a toy theatre. So Harvey stared. 'Watch out!' said Dan, flourishing a dip-net. 'When I tell you dip, you dip. The caplin' 'll school any time from naow on. Where'll we lay, Tom Platt?'

Pushing, shoving, and hauling, greeting old friends here and warning old enemies there, Commodore Tom Platt led his little fleet well to leeward of the general crowd, and immediately three or four men began to haul on their anchors with intent to lee-bow the 'We're Heres.' But a yell of laughter went up as a dory shot from her station with exceeding speed, its occupant pulling madly on the roding.

'Give her slack!' roared twenty voices. 'Let him shake it out.'

'What's the matter?' said Harvey, as the boat flashed away to the southward. 'He's anchored, isn't he?'

'Anchored, sure enough, but his graound-tackle's kinder shifty,' said Dan, laughing. 'Whale's fouled it. . . . Dip, Harve! Here they come!'

The sea round them clouded and darkened, and then frizzed up in showers of tiny silver fish, and over a space of five or six acres the cod began to leap like trout in May; while behind the cod, three or four broad gray-black backs broke the water into boils.

Then everybody shouted and tried to haul up his anchor to get among the school, and fouled his neighbour's line and said what was in his heart, and dipped furiously with his dip-net, and shrieked cautions and advice to his companions, while the deep fizzed like freshly-opened soda-water, and cod, men, and whales together flung in upon the luckless bait. Harvey was nearly knocked overboard by the handle of Dan's net. But in all the wild tumult he noticed, and never forgot, the wicked, set little eye—something like a circus-elephant's eye—of a whale that drove along almost level with the water, and, so he said, winked at him. Three boats found their rodings fouled by these reckless mid-sea hunters, and were towed half a mile ere their horses shook the line free.

Then the caplin moved off, and five minutes later there was no sound except the splash of the sinkers overside, the flapping of the cod, and the whack of the muckles as the men stunned them. It was wonderful fishing. Harvey could see the glimmering cod below, swimming slowly in droves, biting as steadily as they swam. Bank law strictly forbids more than one hook on one line when the dories are on the Virgin or the Eastern Shoals; but so close lay the boats that even single hooks snarled, and Harvey found himself in hot argument with a gentle, hairy Newfoundlander on one side and a howling Portuguese on the other.

Worse than any tangle of fishing-lines was the confusion of the dory-rodings below water. Each man had anchored where it seemed good to him, drifting and rowing round his fixed point. As the fish struck on less quickly, each man wanted to haul up and get to better ground; but every third man found himself intimately

connected with some four or five neighbours. To cut another's roding is crime unspeakable on the Banks; yet it was done, and done without detection, three or four times that day. Tom Platt caught a Maine man in the black act and knocked him over the gunwale with an oar, and Manuel served a fellow-countryman in the same way. But Harvey's anchor-line was cut, and so was Penn's, and they were turned into relief-boats to carry fish to the 'We're Here' as the dories filled. The caplin schooled once more at twilight, when the mad clamour was repeated; and at dusk they rowed back to dress-down by the light of kerosene lamps on the edge of the pen.

It was a huge pile, and they went to sleep while they were dressing. Next day several boats fished right above the cap of the Virgin; and Harvey, with them, looked down on the very weed of that lonely rock, which rises to within twenty feet of the surface. The cod were there in legions, marching solemnly over the leathery kelp. When they bit, they bit all together, and so when they stopped. There was a slack time at noon, and the dories began to search for amusement. It was Dan who sighted the 'Hope of Prague' just coming up, and as her boats joined the company they were greeted with the question: 'Who's the meanest man in the fleet?'

Three hundred voices answered cheerily: 'Nick Bra-ady.' It sounded like an organ chant.

'Who stole the lamp-wicks?' That was Dan's contribution.

'Nick Bra-ady,' sang the boats.

'Who biled the salt bait fer soup?' This was an unknown backbiter a quarter of a mile away.

Again the joyful chorus. Now, Brady was not especially mean, but he had that reputation, and the fleet made the most of it. Then they discovered a man from a Truro boat, who, six years before, had been convicted of using a tackle with five or six hooks—a 'scrowger' they call it—on the Shoals. Naturally, he had been christened 'Scrowger Jim'; and though he had hidden himself on the Georges ever since, he found his honours waiting for him full blown. They took it up in a sort of fire-cracker chorus: 'Jim! O Jim! Jim! O Jim! Sssscrowger Jim!' That pleased everybody. And when a poetical Beverly man—he had been making it up all day, and talked about it for weeks—sang 'The "Carrie Pitman's" anchor doesn't hold her for a cent!' the dories felt that they were indeed fortunate. Then they had to ask that Beverly man how he was off for beans, because even poets must not have things all their own way. Every schooner and nearly every man got it in turn. Was there a careless or dirty cook anywhere? The dories sang about him and his food. Was a schooner badly found? The fleet was told at full length. Had a man hooked tobacco from a messmate? He was named in meeting; the name tossed from roller to roller. Disko's infallible judgments, Long Jack's market-boat that he had sold years ago, Dan's sweetheart (oh, but Dan was an angry boy!), Penn's bad luck with dory-anchors, Salters's views on manure, Manuel's little slips from virtue ashore, and Harvey's lady-like handling of the oar—all were laid before the public; and as the fog fell around them in silvery sheets beneath the sun, the voices sounded like a bench of invisible judges pronouncing sentence.

The dories roved and fished and squabbled till a swell

underran the sea. Then they drew more apart to save their sides, and some one called that if the swell continued the Virgin would break. A reckless Galway man with his nephew denied this, hauled up anchor, and rowed over the very rock itself. Many voices called them to come away, while others dared them to hold on. As the smooth-backed rollers passed to the southward, they hove the dory high and high into the mist, and dropped her in ugly, sucking, dimpled water, where she spun round her anchor, within a foot or two of the hidden rock. It was playing with death for mere bravado; and the boats looked on in uneasy silence till Long Jack rowed up behind his countrymen and quietly cut their roding.

'Can't ye hear ut knockin'?' he cried. 'Pull for your miserable lives! Pull!'

The men swore and tried to argue as the boat drifted; but the next swell checked a little, like a man tripping on a carpet. There was a deep sob and a gathering roar, and the Virgin flung up a couple of acres of foaming water, white, furious, and ghastly over the shoal sea. Then all the boats greatly applauded Long Jack, and the Galway men held their tongue.

'Ain't it elegant?' said Dan, bobbing like a young seal at home. 'She'll break about once every ha'af hour now, 'less the swell piles up good. What's her reg'lar time when she's at work, Tom Platt?'

'Once ivry fifteen minutes, to the tick. Harve, you've seen the greatest thing on the Banks; an' but for Long Jack you'd seen some dead men too.'

There came a sound of merriment where the fog lay thicker and the schooners were ringing their bells. A big bark nosed cautiously out of the mist, and was re-

ceived with shouts and cries of, 'Come along, darlin',' from the Irishry.

'Another Frenchman?' said Harvey.

'Hain't you eyes? She's a Baltimore boat, goin' in fear an' tremblin',' said Dan. 'We'll guy the very sticks out of her. Guess it's the fust time her skipper ever met up with the fleet this way.'

She was a black, buxom eight-hundred-ton craft. Her mainsail was looped up, and her topsail flapped undecidedly in what little wind was moving. Now a bark is feminine beyond all other daughters of the sea, and this tall, hesitating creature, with her white and gilt figurehead, looked just like a bewildered woman half lifting her skirts to cross a muddy street under the jeers of bad little boys. That was very much her situation. She knew she was somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Virgin, had caught the roar of it, and was, therefore, asking her way. This is a small part of what she heard from the dancing dories:

'The Virgin? Fwhat are you talkin' of? This is Le Have on a Sunday mornin'. Go home an' sober up.'

'Go home, ye tarrapin! Go home an' tell 'em we're comin'.'

Half a dozen voices together, in a most tuneful chorus, as her stern went down with a roll and a bubble into the troughs: 'Thay-aah—she—strikes!'

'Hard up! Hard up fer your life! You're on top of her now.'

'Daown! Hard daown! Let go everything!'

'All hands to the pumps!'

'Daown jib an' pole her!'

Here the skipper lost his temper and said things. Instantly fishing was suspended to answer him, and he

heard many curious facts about his boat and her next port of call. They asked him if he were insured; and whence he had stolen his anchor, because, they said, it belonged to the 'Carrie Pitman'; they called his boat mud-scow, and accused him of dumping garbage to frighten the fish; they offered to tow him and charge it to his wife; and one audacious youth slipped almost under the counter, smacked it with his open palm, and yelled, 'Gid up, Buck!'

The cook emptied a pan of ashes on him, and he replied with cod-heads. The bark's crew fired small coal from the galley, and the dories threatened to come aboard and 'razee' her. They would have warned her at once had she been in real peril; but, seeing her well clear of the Virgin, they made the most of their chances. The fun was spoilt when the rock spoke again, a half-mile to windward, and the tormented bark set everything that would draw and went her ways; but the dories felt that the honours lay with them.

All that night the Virgin roared hoarsely; and next morning, over an angry, white-headed sea, Harvey saw the fleet with flickering masts waiting for a lead. Not a dory was hove out till ten o'clock, when the two Jeraulds of the 'Day's Eye,' imagining a lull which did not exist, set the example. In a minute half the boats were out and bobbing in the cockly swells, but Troop kept the 'We're Heres' at work dressing-down. He saw no sense in 'dares'; and as the storm grew that evening they had the pleasure of receiving wet strangers, only too glad to make any refuge in the gale. The boys stood by the dory-tackles with lanterns, the men ready to haul, one eye cocked for the sweeping wave that would make them drop everything and hold on for the

dear life. Out of the dark would come a yell of 'Dory, dory!' They would hook up and haul in a drenched man and a half-sunk boat till their decks were littered down with nests of dories and the bunks were full. Five times in their watch did Harvey, with Dan, jump at the fore-gaff where it lay lashed on the boom, and cling with arms, legs, and teeth to rope and spar and sodden canvas as a big wave filled the decks. One dory was smashed to pieces and the sea pitched the man head first on to the decks, cutting his forehead open; and about dawn, when the racing seas glimmered white all along their cold edges, another man, blue and ghastly, crawled in with a broken hand, asking news of his brother. Seven extra mouths sat down to breakfast—a Swede; a Chatham skipper; a boy from Hancock, Maine; one Duxbury, and three Provincetown men.

There was a general sorting out among the fleet next day; and though no one said anything, all ate with better appetites when boat after boat reported full crews aboard. Only a couple of Portuguese and an old man from Gloucester were drowned, but many were cut or bruised; and two schooners had parted their tackle and been blown to the southward, three days' sail. A man died on a Frenchman—it was the same bark that had traded tobacco with the 'We're Heres.' She slipped away quite quietly one wet, white morning, moved to a patch of deep water, her sails all hanging anyhow, and Harvey saw the funeral through Disko's spy-glass. It was only an oblong bundle slid over-side. They did not seem to have any form of service, but in the night, at anchor, Harvey heard them across the star-powdered black water singing something that sounded like a hymn. It went to a very slow tune:

'La brigantine
Qui va tourner,
Roule et s'incline
Pour m'entrainer.
Oh, Vierge Marie,
Pour moi priez Dieu!
Adieu, patrie;
Quebec, adieu!'

Tom Platt visited her, because, he said, the dead man was his brother as a Freemason. It came out that a wave had doubled the poor fellow over the heel of the bowsprit and broken his back. The news spread like a flash, for, contrary to general custom, the Frenchman held an auction of the dead man's kit,—he had no friends at St. Malo or Miquelon,—and everything was spread out on the top of the house, from his red knitted cap to the leather belt with the sheath-knife at the back. Dan and Harvey were out on twenty-fathom water in the 'Hattie S.', and naturally rowed over to join the crowd. It was a long pull, and they stayed some little time while Dan bought the knife, which had a curious brass handle. When they dropped over-side and pushed off into a drizzle of rain and a lop of sea, it occurred to them that they might get into trouble for neglecting the lines.

'Guess 'twon't hurt us any to be warmed up,' said Dan, shivering under his oilskins, and they rowed on into the heart of a white fog which, as usual, dropped on them without warning.

'There's too much blame tide hereabouts to trust to your instinks,' he said. 'Heave over the anchor, Harve, and we'll fish a piece till the thing lifts. Bend

on your biggest lead. Three pound ain't any too much in this water. See how she's tightened on her rodin' already.'

There was quite a little bubble at the bows, where some irresponsible Bank current held the dory full stretch on her rope; but they could not see a boat's length in any direction. Harvey turned up his collar and bunched himself over his reel with the air of a wearied navigator. Fog had no special terrors for him now. They fished a while in silence, and found the cod struck on well. Then Dan drew the sheath-knife and tested the edge of it on the gunwale.

'That's a daisy,' said Harvey. 'How did you get it so cheap?'

'On account o' their blame Cath'lic superstitions,' said Dan, jabbing with the bright blade. 'They don't fancy takin' iron from off of a dead man, so to speak. See them Arichat Frenchmen step back when I bid?'

'But an auction ain't taking anything off a dead man. It's business.'

'We know it ain't, but there's no goin' in the teeth o' superstition. That's one o' the advantages o' livin' in a progressive country.' And Dan began whistling:

'Oh, Double Thatcher, how are you?
Now Eastern Point comes inter view.
The girls an' boys we soon shall see,
At anchor off Cape Ann!'

'Why didn't that Eastport man bid, then? He bought his boots. Ain't Maine progressive?'

'Maine? Pshaw! They don't know enough, or they hain't got money enough, to paint their haouses in

Maine. I've seen 'em. The Eastport man he told me that the knife had been used—so the French captain told him—used up on the French coast last year.'

'Cut a man? Heave 's the muckle.' Harvey hauled in his fish, rebaited, and threw over.

'Killed him! Course, when I heard that I was keener'n ever to get it.'

'Christmas! I didn't know it,' said Harvey, turning round. 'I'll give you a dollar for it when I—get my wages. Say, I'll give you two dollars.'

'Honest? D'you like it as much as all that?' said Dan, flushing. 'Well, to tell the truth, I kinder got it for you—to give; but I didn't let on till I saw how you'd take it. It's yours and welcome, Harve, because we're dory-mates, and so on and so forth, an' so followin'. Catch a-holt!'

He held it out, belt and all.

'But look at here. Dan, I don't see—'

'Take it. 'Tain't no use to me. I wish you to hev it.'

The temptation was irresistible. 'Dan, you're a white man,' said Harvey. 'I'll keep it as long as I live.'

'That's good hearin',' said Dan, with a pleasant laugh; and then, anxious to change the subject: 'Looks 's if your line was fast to somethin'.'

'Fouled, I guess,' said Harve, tugging. Before he pulled up he fastened the belt round him, and with deep delight heard the tip of the sheath click on the thwart. 'Con-cern the thing!' he cried. 'She acts as though she were on strawberry-bottom. It's all sand here, ain't it?'

Dan reached over and gave a judgmatic tweak. 'Halibut 'll act that way 'f he's sulky. Thet's not straw-

berry-bottom. Yank her once or twice. She gives, sure. Guess we'd better haul up an' make certain.'

They pulled together, making fast at each turn on the cleats, and the hidden weight rose sluggishly.

'Prize, oh! Haul!' shouted Dan, but the shout ended in a shrill, double shriek of horror, for out of the sea came—the body of the dead Frenchman buried two days before! The hook had caught him under the right arm-pit, and he swayed, erect and horrible, head and shoulders above water. His arms were tied to his side, and—he had no face. The boys fell over each other in a heap at the bottom of the dory, and there they lay while the thing bobbed alongside, held on the shortened line.

'The tide—the tide brought him!' said Harvey with quivering lips, as he fumbled at the clasp of the belt.

'Oh, Lord! oh, Harve!' groaned Dan, 'be quick. He's come for it. Let him have it. Take it off.'

'I don't want it! I don't want it!' cried Harvey. 'I can't find the bu-buckle.'

'Quick, Harve! He's on your line!'

Harvey sat up to unfasten the belt, facing the head that had no face under its streaming hair. 'He's fast still,' he whispered to Dan, who slipped out his knife and cut the line, as Harvey flung the belt far over-side. The body shot down with a plop, and Dan cautiously rose to his knees, whiter than the fog.

'He come for it. He come for it. I've seen a stale one hauled up on a trawl and I didn't much care, but he come to us special.'

'I wish—I wish I hadn't taken the knife. Then he'd have come on your line.'

'Dunno as thet would ha' made any differ. We're

both scared out o' ten years' growth. Oh, Harve, did ye see his head?'

'Did I? I'll never forget it. But look at here, Dan; it couldn't have been meant. It was only the tide.'

'Tide! He come for it, Harve. Why, they sunk him six mile to south'ard o' the fleet, an' we're two miles from where she's lyin' now. They told me he was weighted with a fathom an' a half o' chain-cable.'

'Wonder what he did with the knife—up on the French coast?'

'Something bad. Guess he's bound to take it with him to the Judgment, an' so— What are you doin' with the fish?'

'Heaving 'em overboard,' said Harvey.

'What for? We shan't eat 'em.'

'I don't care. I had to look at his face while I was takin' the belt off. You can keep your catch if you like. I've no use for mine.'

Dan said nothing, but threw his fish over again.

'Guess it's best to be on the safe side,' he murmured at last. 'I'd give a month's pay if this fog 'ud lift. Things go abaout in a fog that ye don't see in clear weather—yo-hoes an' hollerers and such like. I'm sorter relieved he come the way he did instid o' walkin'. He might ha' walked.'

'Do-on't, Dan! We're right on top of him now. Wish I was safe aboard, bein' pounded by Uncle Salters.'

'They'll be lookin' fer us in a little. Gimme the tooter.' Dan took the tin dinner-horn, but paused before he blew.

'Go on,' said Harvey. 'I don't want to stay here all night.'

'Question is, haow he'd take it. There was a man

from down the coast told me once he was in a schooner where they darsen't ever blow a horn to the dories, becaze the skipper—not the man he was with, but a captain that had run her five years before—he'd drownded a boy alongside in a drunk fit; an' ever after, that boy he'd row alongside too and shout, "'Dory! dory!'" with the rest.'

'Dory! dory!' a muffled voice cried through the fog. They cowered again, and the horn dropped from Dan's hand.

'Hold on!' cried Harvey, 'it's the cook.'

'Dunno what made me think o' thet fool tale, either,' said Dan. 'It's the doctor, sure enough.'

'Dan! Danny! Oooh, Dan! Harve! Harvey! Oooh, Haarveee!'

'We're here,' sung both boys together. They heard oars, but could see nothing till the cook, shining and dripping, rowed into them.

'What iss happened?' said he. 'You will be beat at home.'

'Thet's what we want. Thet's what we're sufferin' for,' said Dan. 'Anything homey's good enough fer us. We've had kinder depressin' company.' As the cook passed them a line, Dan told him the tale.

'Yess! He come for hiss knife,' was all he said at the end.

Never had the little rocking 'We're Here' looked so deliciously home-like as when the cook, born and bred in fogs, rowed them back to her. There was a warm glow of light from the cabin and a satisfying smell of food forward, and it was heavenly to hear Disko and the others, all quite alive and solid, leaning over the rail and promising them a first-class pounding. But the cook was a black master of strategy. He did not get the

dories aboard till he had given the more striking points of the tale, explaining as he backed and bumped round the counter how Harvey was the mascot to destroy any possible bad luck. So the boys came over-side as rather uncanny heroes, and every one asked them questions instead of pounding them for making trouble. Little Penn delivered quite a speech on the folly of superstitions; but public opinion was against him and in favour of Long Jack, who told the most excruciating ghost-stories till nearly midnight. Under that influence no one except Salters and Penn said anything about 'idolatry' when the cook put a lighted candle, a cake of flour and water, and a pinch of salt on a shingle, and floated them out astern to keep the Frenchman quiet in case he was still restless. Dan lit the candle because he had bought the belt, and the cook grunted and muttered charms as long as he could see the ducking point of flame.

Said Harvey to Dan, as they turned in after watch, 'How about progress and Catholic superstitions?'

'Huh! I guess I'm as enlightened and progressive as the next man, but when it comes to a dead St. Malo deck-hand scarin' a couple o' pore boys stiff fer the sake of a thirty-cent knife, why, then, the cook can take hold fer all o' me. I mistrust furriners, livin' or dead.'

Next morning all, except the cook, were rather ashamed of the ceremonies, and went to work double tides, speaking gruffly to one another.

The 'We're Here' was racing neck and neck for her last few loads against the 'Parry Norman'; and so close was the struggle that the fleet took sides and betted tobacco. All hands worked at the lines or dressing-down till they fell asleep where they stood—beginning before dawn and ending when it was too dark to see.

They even used the cook as pitcher, and turned Harvey into the hold to pass salt, while Dan helped to dress-down. Luckily a 'Parry Norman' man sprained his wrist falling down the foc'sle, and the 'We're Heres' gained. Harvey could not see how one more fish could be crammed into her, but Disko and Tom Platt stowed and stowed, and planked the mass down with big stones from the ballast, and there was always 'jest another day's work.' Disko did not tell them when all the salt was wetted. He rolled to the lazarette aft the cabin and began hauling out the big mainsail. This was at ten in the morning. The riding-sail was down and the main- and topsail were up by noon, and dories came alongside with letters for home, envying their good fortune. At last she cleared decks, hoisted her flag,—as is the right of the first boat off the Banks,—up-anchored and began to move. Disko pretended that he wished to accommodate folk who had not sent in their mail, and so worked her gracefully in and out among the schooners. In reality, that was his little triumphant procession, and for the fifth year running it showed what kind of mariner he was. Dan's accordion and Tom Platt's fiddle supplied the music of the magic verse you must not sing till all the salt is wet:

'Hih! Yih! Yoho! Send your letters raound!
All our salt is wetted, an' the anchor's off the ground!
Bend, oh, bend your mains'l, we're back to Yankee-land—
With fifteen hunder' quintal,
An' fifteen hunder' quintal,
'Teen hunder' toppin' quintal,
'Twix' old 'Queereau an' Grand.'

The last letters pitched on deck wrapped round pieces of coal, and the Gloucester men shouted messages to their wives and womenfolk and owners, while the 'We're Here' finished the musical ride through the fleet, her headsails quivering like a man's hand when he raises it to say good-bye.

Harvey very soon discovered that the 'We're Here' with her riding-sail, strolling from berth to berth, and the 'We're Here' headed west by south under home canvas, were two very different boats. There was a bite and kick to the wheel even in 'boy's weather'; he could feel the dead weight in the hold flung forward mightily across the surges, and the streaming line of bubbles over-side made his eyes dizzy.

Disko kept them busy fiddling with the sails; and when those were flattened like a racing yacht's, Dan had to wait on the big topsail, which was put over by hand every time she went about. In spare moments they pumped, for the packed fish dripped brine, which does not improve a cargo. But since there was no fishing, Harvey had time to look at the sea from another point of view. The low-sided schooner was naturally on most intimate terms with her surroundings. They saw little of the horizon save when she topped a swell; and usually she was elbowing, fidgeting, and coaxing her steadfast way through gray, gray-blue, or black hollows laced across and across with streaks of shivering foam; or rubbing herself caressingly along the flank of some bigger water-hill. It was as if she said: 'You wouldn't hurt me, surely? I'm only the little "We're Here."' Then she would slide away chuckling softly to herself till she was brought up by some fresh obstacle. The dullest of folk cannot see this kind of thing hour after

hour through long days without noticing it; and Harvey, being anything but dull, began to comprehend and enjoy the dry chorus of wave-tops turning over with a sound of incessant tearing; the hurry of the winds working across open spaces and herding the purple-blue cloud-shadows; the splendid upheaval of the red sunrise; the folding and packing away of the morning mists, wall after wall withdrawn across the white floors; the salty glare and blaze of noon; the kiss of rain falling over thousands of dead, flat square miles; the chilly blackening of everything at the day's end; and the million wrinkles of the sea under the moonlight, when the jib-boom solemnly poked at the low stars, and Harvey went down to get a doughnut from the cook.

But the best fun was when the boys were put on the wheel together, Tom Platt within hail, and she cuddled her lee-rail down to the crashing blue, and kept a little home-made rainbow arching unbroken over her windlass. Then the jaws of the booms whined against the mast, and the sheets creaked, and the sails filled with roaring; and when she slid into a hollow she trampled like a woman tripped in her own silk dress, and came out, her jib wet half-way up, yearning and peering for the tall twin lights of Thatcher's Island.

They left the cold gray of the Bank sea, saw the lumber ships making for Quebec by the Straits of St. Lawrence, with the Jersey salt-brigs from Spain and Sicily; found a friendly north-easter off Artimon Bank that drove them within view of the East light of Sable Island —a sight Disko did not linger over—and stayed with them past Western and Le Have, to the northern fringe of Georges. From there they picked up the deeper water, and let her go merrily.

'Hattie's pulling on the string,' Dan confided to Harvey. 'Hattie an' ma. Next Sunday you'll be hirin' a boy to throw water on the windows to make ye go to sleep. Guess you'll keep with us till your folks come. Do you know the best of gettin' ashore again?'

'Hot bath?' said Harvey. His eyebrows were all white with dried spray.

'That's good, but a night-shirt's better. I've been dreamin' o' night-shirts ever since we bent our mainsail. Ye can wiggle your toes then. Ma'll hev a new one fer me, all washed soft. It's home, Harve. It's home! Ye can sense it in the air. We're runnin' into the aidge of a hot wave naow, an' I can smell the bay-berries. Wonder if we'll get in fer supper. Port a trifle.'

The hesitating sails flapped and lurched in the close air as the deep smoothed out, blue and oily, round them. When they whistled for a wind only the rain came in spiky rods, bubbling and drumming, and behind the rain the thunder and the lightning of mid-August. They lay on the deck with bare feet and arms, telling one another what they would order at their first meal ashore; for now the land was in plain sight. A Gloucester sword-fish boat drifted alongside, a man in the little pulpit on the bowsprit flourishing his harpoon, his bare head plastered down with the wet. 'And all's well!' he sang cheerily, as though he were watch on a big liner. 'Wouverman's waiting fer you, Disko. What's the news o' the fleet?'

Disko shouted it and passed on, while the wild summer storm pounded overhead and the lightning flickered along the capes from four different quarters at once. It gave the low circle of hills round Gloucester Harbour, Ten Pound Island, the fish-sheds, with the broken line

of house-roofs, and each spar and buoy on the water, in blinding photographs that came and went a dozen times to the minute as the 'We're Here' crawled in on half-flood, and the whistling-buoy moaned and mourned behind her. Then the storm died out in long, separated, vicious dags of blue-white flame, followed by a single roar like the roar of a mortar-battery, and the shaken air tingled under the stars, as it got back to silence.

'The flag, the flag,' said Disko suddenly, pointing upward.

'What is ut?' said Long Jack.

'Otto! Ha'af mast. They can see us from shore now.'

'I'd clean forgot. He's no folk to Gloucester, has he?'

'Girl he was goin' to be married to this fall.'

'Mary pity her!' said Long Jack, and lowered the little flag half-mast for the sake of Otto, swept overboard in a gale off Le Have three months before.

Disko wiped the wet from his eyes and led the 'We're Here' to Wouverman's wharf, giving his orders in whispers, while she swung round moored tugs, and night-watchmen hailed her from the ends of inky-black piers. Over and above the darkness and the mystery of the procession, Harvey could feel the land close round him once more, with its thousands of people asleep, and the smell of earth after rain, and the familiar noise of a switching-engine coughing to herself in a freight-yard; and all those things made his heart beat and his throat dry up as he stood by the foresheet. They heard the anchor-watch snoring on a lighthouse tug, nosed into a pocket of darkness where a lantern glimmered on either side; somebody waked with a grunt, threw them a rope, and they made fast to a silent wharf flanked with great

iron-roofed sheds full of warm emptiness, and lay there without a sound.

Then Harvey sat down by the wheel, and sobbed and sobbed as though his heart would break, and a tall woman who had been sitting on a weight-scale dropped down into the schooner and kissed Dan once on the cheek; for she was his mother, and she had seen the 'We're Here' by the lightning flashes. She took no notice of Harvey till he had recovered himself a little, and Disko had told her his story. Then they went to Disko's house together as the dawn was breaking; and until the telegraph office was open and he could wire to his folk, Harvey Cheyne was perhaps the loneliest boy in all America. But the curious thing was that Disko and Dan seemed to think none the worse of him for crying.

Wouverman was not ready for Disko's prices till Disko, sure that the 'We're Here' was at least a week ahead of any other Gloucester boat, had given him a few days to swallow them; so all hands played about the streets, and Long Jack stopped the Rocky Neck trolley, on principle, as he said, till the conductor let him ride free. But Dan went about with his freckled nose in the air, bung-full of mystery and most haughty to his family.

'Dan, I'll hev to lay inter you ef you act this way,' said Troop pensively. 'Sence we've come ashore this time you've bin a heap too fresh.'

'I'd lay into him naow ef he was mine,' said Uncle Salters sourly. He and Penn boarded with the Troops.

'Oho!' said Dan, shuffling with the accordion round the back yard, ready to leap the fence if the enemy advanced. 'Dad, you're welcome to your own jedgment, but remember I've warned ye. Your own flesh an'

blood ha' warned ye! 'Tain't any o' my fault ef you're mistook, but I'll be on deck to watch ye. An' ez fer yeou, Uncle Salters, Pharaoh's chief butler ain't in it 'longside o' you! You watch aout an' wait. You'll be ploughed under like your own blamed clover; but me—Dan Troop—I'll flourish like a green bay-tree because I warn't stuck on my own opinion.'

Disko was smoking in all his shore dignity and a pair of beautiful carpet slippers. 'You're gettin' ez crazy as poor Harve. You two go araound gigglin' an' squinchin' an' kickin' each other under the table till there's no peace in the haouse,' said he.

'There's goin' to be a heap less—fer some folks,' Dan replied. 'You wait an' see.'

He and Harvey went out on the trolley to East Gloucester, where they tramped through the bay-berry bushes to the lighthouse, and lay down on the big red boulders and laughed themselves hungry. Harvey had shown Dan a telegram, and the two swore to keep silence till the shell burst.

'Harve's folk?' said Dan, with an unruffled face after supper. 'Well, I guess they don't amount to much of anything, or we'd ha' heard from 'em by naow. His pop keeps a kind o' store out West. Maybe he'll give you's much as five dollars, dad.'

'What did I tell ye?' said Salters. 'Don't sputter over your vittles, Dan.'

CHAPTER IX

WHATEVER his private sorrows may be, a multi-millionaire, like any other working man, should keep abreast of his business. Harvey Cheyne, senior, had gone East late in June to meet a woman broken down, half mad, who dreamed day and night of her son drowning in the gray seas. He had surrounded her with doctors, trained nurses, massage women, and even faith-cure companions, but they were useless. Mrs. Cheyne lay still and moaned, or talked of her boy by the hour together to any one who would listen. Hope she had none, and who could offer it? All she needed was assurance that drowning did not hurt; and her husband watched to guard lest she should make the experiment. Of his own sorrow he spoke little—hardly realised the depth of it till he caught himself asking the calendar on his writing-desk, 'What's the use of going on?'

There had always lain a pleasant notion at the back of his head that, some day, when he had rounded off everything and the boy had left college, he would take his son to his heart and lead him into his possessions. Then that boy, he argued, as busy fathers do, would instantly become his companion, partner, and ally, and there would follow splendid years of great works carried out together—the old head backing the young fire.

Now his boy was dead—lost at sea, as it might have been a Swede sailor from one of Cheyne's big tea-ships; the wife was dying, or worse; he himself was trodden down by platoons of women and doctors and maids and attendants; worried almost beyond endurance by the shift and change of her poor restless whims; hopeless, with no heart to meet his many enemies.

He had taken the wife to his raw new palace in San Diego, where she and her people occupied a wing of great price, and Cheyne, in a veranda-room between a secretary and a typewriter, who was also a telegraphist, toiled along wearily from day to day. There was a war of rates among four Western railroads in which he was supposed to be interested; a devastating strike had developed in his lumber-camps in Oregon, and the legislature of the State of California, which has no love for its makers, was preparing open war against him.

Ordinarily he would have accepted battle ere it was offered, and have waged a pleasant and unscrupulous campaign. But now he sat limply, his soft black hat pushed forward on to his nose, his big body shrunk inside his loose clothes, staring at his boots or the Chinese junks in the bay, and assenting absently to the secretary's questions as he opened the Saturday mail.

Cheyne was wondering how much it would cost to drop everything and pull out. He carried huge insurances, could buy himself royal annuities, and between one of his places in Colorado and a little society (that would do the wife good), say in Washington and the South Carolina islands, a man might forget plans that had come to nothing. On the other hand. . . .

The click of the typewriter stopped; the girl was looking at the secretary, who had turned white.

He passed Cheyne a telegram repeated from San Francisco:—

'Picked up by fishing schooner "We're Here" having fallen off boat great times on Banks fishing all well waiting Gloucester Mass care Disko Troop for money or orders wire what shall do and how is mamma Harvey N. Cheyne.'

The father let it fall, laid his head down on the roller-top of the shut desk, and breathed heavily. The secretary ran for Mrs. Cheyne's doctor, who found Cheyne pacing to and fro.

'What—what d'you think of it? Is it possible? Is there any meaning to it? I can't quite make it out,' he cried.

'I can,' said the doctor. 'I lose seven thousand a year—that's all.' He thought of the struggling New York practice he had dropped at Cheyne's imperious bidding, and returned the telegram with a sigh.

'You mean you'd tell her? 'May be a fraud?'

'What's the motive?' said the doctor coolly. 'Detection's too certain. It's the boy sure enough.'

Enter a French maid, impudently, as an indispensable one who is kept on only by large wages.

'Mrs. Cheyne she say you must come at once. She think you are seek.'

The master of thirty millions bowed his head meekly and followed Suzanne; and a thin, high voice on the upper landing of the great white-wood square staircase cried, 'What is it? What has happened?'

No doors could keep out the shriek that rang through the echoing house a moment later, when her husband blurted out the news.

'And that's all right,' said the doctor serenely to the typewriter. 'About the only medical statement in novels with any truth to it is that joy don't kill, Miss Kinzey.'

'I know it; but we've a heap to do first.' Miss Kinzey was from Milwaukee, somewhat direct of speech, and as her fancy leaned towards the secretary, she divined there was work in hand. He was looking earnestly at the vast roller-map of America on the wall.

'Milsom, we're going right across. Private car—straight through—Boston. Fix the connections,' shouted Cheyne down the staircase.

'I thought so.'

The secretary turned to the typewriter, and their eyes met (out of that was born a story—nothing to do with this story). She looked inquiringly, doubtful of his resources. He signed to her to move to the Morse as a general brings brigades into action. Then he swept his hand musician-wise through his hair, regarded the ceiling, and set to work, while Miss Kinzey's white fingers called up the Continent of America.

'"K. H. Wade, Los Angeles—" The "Constance" is at Los Angeles, isn't she, Miss Kinzey?'

'Yep.' Miss Kinzey nodded between clicks as the secretary looked at his watch.

'Ready? "Send 'Constance,' private car, here, and arrange for special to leave here Sunday in time to connect with New York Limited at Sixteenth Street, Chicago, Tuesday next."'

Click—click—click! 'Couldn't you better that?' said Miss Kinzey.

'Not on those grades. That gives 'em sixty hours from here to Chicago. They won't gain anything by

taking a special east of that. Ready? "Also arrange with Lake Shore and Michigan Southern to take 'Constance' on New York Central and Hudson River Buffalo to Albany, and B. and A. the same Albany to Boston. Indispensable I should reach Boston Wednesday evening. Be sure nothing prevents. Have also wired Canniff, Toucey, and Barnes.—Signed Cheyne."'

Miss Kinzey nodded, and the secretary went on.

'Now then. Canniff, Toucey, and Barnes, of course. Ready? "Canniff, Chicago. Please take my private car 'Constance' from Santa Fe at Sixteenth Street next Tuesday p. m. on N. Y. Limited through to Buffalo and deliver N. Y. C. for Albany." — Ever bin to N'York, Miss Kinzey? We'll go some day.— Ready? "Take 'Constance' car Buffalo to Albany on Limited Tuesday p. m." That's for Toucey.'

'Haven't bin to Noo York, but I know that!' with a toss of the head.

'Beg pardon. Now, Boston and Albany, Barnes, same instructions from Albany through to Boston. Leave three-five p. m. (you needn't wire that); arrive nine-five p. m. Wednesday. That covers everything Wade will do, but it pays to shake up the managers.'

'It's great,' said Miss Kinzey, with a look of admiration. This was the kind of man she understood and appreciated.

' 'Tisn't bad,' said Milsom modestly. 'Now, any one but me would have lost thirty hours and spent a week working out the run, instead of handing him over to the Santa Fe straight through to Chicago.'

'But see here, about that Noo York Limited. Chauncey Depew himself couldn't hitch his car to her,' Miss Kinzey suggested, recovering herself.

'Yes, but this isn't Chauncey. It's Cheyne—lightning. It goes.'

'Even so. 'Guess we'd better wire the boy. You've forgotten that, anyhow.'

'I'll ask.'

When he returned with the father's message bidding Harvey meet them in Boston at an appointed hour, he found Miss Kinzey laughing over the keys. Then Milsom laughed too, for the frantic clicks from Los Angeles ran: 'We want to know why—why—why? General uneasiness developed and spreading.'

Ten minutes later Chicago appealed to Miss Kinzey in these words: 'If crime of century is maturing please warn friends in time. We are all getting to cover here.'

This was capped by a message from Topeka (and wherein Topeka was concerned even Milsom could not guess): 'Don't shoot, Colonel. We'll come down.'

Cheyne smiled grimly at the consternation of his enemies when the telegrams were laid before him. 'They think we're on the war-path. Tell' em we don't feel like fighting just now, Milsom. Tell 'em what we're going for. I guess you and Miss Kinzey had better come along, though it isn't likely I shall do any business on the road. Tell 'em the truth—for once.'

So the truth was told. Miss Kinzey clicked in the sentiment while the secretary added the memorable quotation, 'Let us have peace,' and in board-rooms two thousand miles away the representatives of sixty-three million dollars' worth of variously manipulated railroad interests breathed more freely. Cheyne was flying to meet the only son, so miraculously restored to him. The bear was seeking his cub, not the bulls. Hard men who had their knives drawn to fight for their financial

lives put away the weapons and wished him God-speed, while half a dozen panic-smitten tinpot roads perked up their heads and spoke of the wonderful things they would have done had not Cheyne buried the hatchet.

It was a busy week-end among the wires: for, now that their anxiety was removed, men and cities hastened to accommodate. Los Angeles called to San Diego and Barstow that the Southern California engineers might know and be ready in their lonely roundhouses; Barstow passed the word to the Atlantic and Pacific; and Albuquerque flung it the whole length of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe management, even into Chicago. An engine, combination-car with crew, and the great and gilded 'Constance' private car were to be 'expedited' over those two thousand three hundred and fifty miles. The train would take precedence of one hundred and seventy-seven others meeting and passing; despatchers and crews of every one of those said trains must be notified. Sixteen locomotives, sixteen engineers, and sixteen firemen would be needed —each and every one the best available. Two and one-half minutes would be allowed for changing engines; three for watering and two for coaling. 'Warn the men, and arrange tanks and chutes accordingly; for Harvey Cheyne is in a hurry, a hurry—a hurry,' sang the wires. 'Forty miles an hour will be expected, and division superintendents will accompany this special over their respective divisions. From San Diego to Sixteenth Street, Chicago, let the magic carpet be laid down. Hurry! oh, hurry!'

'It will be hot,' said Cheyne, as they rolled out of San Diego in the dawn of Sunday. 'We're going to hurry, mamma, just as fast as ever we can; but I really don't

think there's any good of your putting on your bonnet and gloves yet. You'd much better lie down and take your medicine. I'd play you a game o' dominoes, but it's Sunday.'

'I'll be good. Oh, I will be good. Only—taking off my bonnet makes me feel as if we'd never get there.'

'Try to sleep a little, mamma, and we'll be in Chicago before you know.'

'But it's Boston, father. Tell them to hurry.'

The six-foot drivers were hammering their way to San Bernardino and the Mohave wastes, but this was no grade for speed. That would come later. The heat of the desert followed the heat of the hills as they turned east to the Needles and the Colorado River. The car cracked in the utter drouth and glare, and they put crushed ice to Mrs. Cheyne's neck, and toiled up the long, long grades, past Ash Fork, towards Flagstaff, where the forests and quarries are, under the dry, remote skies. The needle of the speed-indicator flicked and wagged to and fro; the cinders rattled on the roof, and a whirl of dust sucked after the whirling wheels. The crew of the combination sat on their bunks, panting in their shirt-sleeves, and Cheyne found himself among them shouting old old stories of the railroad that every trainman knows, above the roar of the car. He told them about his son, and how the sea had given up its dead, and they nodded and spat and rejoiced with him; asked after 'her, back there,' and whether she could stand it if the engineer 'let her out a piece,' and Cheyne thought she could. Accordingly, the great fire-horse was 'let out' from Flagstaff to Winslow till a division superintendent protested.

But Mrs. Cheyne, in the boudoir state-room, where

the French maid, sallow-white with fear, clung to the silver doorhandle, only moaned a little and begged her husband to bid them 'hurry.' And so they dropped the dry sands and moon-struck rocks of Arizona behind them, and grilled on till the crash of the couplings and the wheeze of the brake-hose told them they were at Coolidge by the Continental Divide.

Three bold and experienced men—cool, confident, and dry when they began; white, quivering, and wet when they finished their trick at those terrible wheels—swung her over the great lift from Albuquerque to Glorietta and beyond Springer, up and up to the Raton Tunnel on the State line, whence they dropped rocking into La Junta, had sight of the Arkansaw, and tore down the long slope to Dodge City, where Cheyne took comfort once again from setting his watch an hour ahead.

There was very little talk in the car. The secretary and typewriter sat together on the stamped Spanish leather cushions by the plate-glass observation window at the rear end, watching the surge and ripple of the ties crowded back behind them, and, it is believed, making notes of the scenery. Cheyne moved nervously between his own extravagant gorgeousness and the naked necessity of the combination, an unlit cigar in his teeth, till the pitying crews forgot that he was their tribal enemy, and did their best to entertain him.

At night the bunched electrics lit up that distressful palace of all the luxuries, and they fared sumptuously, swinging on through the emptiness of abject desolation. Now they heard the swish of a water-tank, and the guttural voice of a Chinaman, the clink-clink of hammers that tested the Krupp-steel wheels, and the oath of a tramp chased off the rear platform; now the solid

crash of coal shot into the tender; and now a beating back of noises as they flew past a waiting train. Now they looked out into great abysses, a trestle purring beneath their tread, or up to rocks that barred out half the stars. Now scaur and ravine changed and rolled back to jagged mountains on the horizon's edge, and now broke into hills lower and lower, till at last came the true plains.

At Dodge City an unknown hand threw in a copy of a Kansas paper containing some sort of an interview with Harvey, who had evidently fallen in with an enterprising reporter, telegraphed on from Boston. The joyful journalese revealed that it was beyond question their boy, and it soothed Mrs. Cheyne for a while. Her one word 'hurry' was conveyed by the crews to the engineers at Nickerson, Topeka, and Marceline, where the grades are easy, and they brushed the continent behind them. Towns and villages were close together now, and a man could feel here that he moved among people.

'I can't see the dial, and my eyes ache so. What are we doing?'

'The very best we can, mamma. There's no sense in getting before the Limited. We'd only have to wait.'

'I don't care. I want to feel we're moving. Sit down and tell me the miles.'

Cheyne sat down and read the dial for her (there were some miles which stand for records to this day), but the seventy-foot car never changed its long steamer-like roll, moving through the heat with the hum of a giant bee. Yet the speed was not enough for Mrs. Cheyne; and the heat, the remorseless August heat, was making her giddy; the clock hands would not move, and when, oh, when would they be in Chicago?

It is not true that, as they changed engines at Fort Madison, Cheyne passed over to the Amalgamated Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers an endowment sufficient to enable them to fight him and his fellows on equal terms for evermore. He paid his obligations to engineers and firemen as he believed they deserved, and only his bank knows what he gave the crews who had sympathised with him. It is on record that the last crew took entire charge of switching operations at Sixteenth Street, because 'she' was in a doze at last, and Heaven was to help any one who bumped her.

Now the highly-paid specialist who conveys the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Limited from Chicago to Elkhart is something of an autocrat, and he does not approve of being told how to back up to a car. None the less he handled the 'Constance' as if she might have been a load of dynamite, and when the crew rebuked him, they did it in whispers and dumb show.

'Pshaw!' said the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe men, discussing life later; 'we weren't runnin' for a record. Harvey Cheyne's wife she were sick back, an' we didn't want to jounce her. Come to think of it, our runnin' time from San Diego to Chicago was 57.54. You can tell that to them Eastern way-trains. When we're tryin' for a record, we'll let you know.'

To the Western man (though this would not please either city), Chicago and Boston are cheek by jowl, and some railroads encourage the delusion. The Limited whirled the 'Constance' into Buffalo, and the arms of the New York Central and Hudson River (illustrious magnates with white whiskers and gold charms on their watch-chains boarded her here to talk a little business to Cheyne), who slid her gracefully into Albany, where

the Boston and Albany completed the run from tide-water to tide-water—total time, eighty-seven hours and thirty-five minutes, or three days, fifteen hours and one-half. Harvey was waiting for them.

After violent emotion most people and all boys demand food. They feasted the returned prodigal behind drawn curtains, cut off in their great happiness, while the trains roared in and out around them. Harvey ate, drank, and enlarged on his adventures all in one breath, and when he had a hand free his mother fondled it. His voice was thickened with living in the open, salt air; his palms were rough and hard, his wrists dotted with the marks of gurry-sores; and a fine full flavour of cod-fish hung round rubber boots and blue jersey.

The father, well used to judging men, looked at him keenly. He did not know what enduring harm the boy might have taken. Indeed, he caught himself thinking that he knew very little whatever of his son; but he distinctly remembered an unsatisfied dough-faced youth who took delight in 'calling down the old man' and reducing his mother to tears—such a person as adds to the gaiety of public rooms and hotel piazzas where the ingenuous young of the wealthy play with or revile the bell-boys. But this well-set-up fisher youth did not wriggle, looked at him with eyes steady, clear, and unflinching, and spoke in a tone distinctly, even startlingly, respectful. There was that in his voice, too, which seemed to promise that the change might be permanent, and that the new Harvey had come to stay.

'Some one's been coercing him,' thought Cheyne. 'Now Constance would never have allowed that. Don't see as Europe could have done it any better.'

'But why didn't you tell this man, Troop, who you were?' the mother repeated, when Harvey had expanded his story at least twice.

'Disko Troop, dear. The best man that ever walked a deck. I don't care who the next is.'

'Why didn't you tell him to put you ashore? You know papa would have made it up to him ten times over.'

'I know it; but he thought I was crazy. I'm afraid I called him a thief because I couldn't find the bills in my pocket.'

'A sailor found them by the flagstaff that—that night,' sobbed Mrs. Cheyne.

'That explains it, then. I don't blame Troop any. I just said I wouldn't work—on a Banker, too—and of course he hit me on the nose, and, oh! I bled like a stuck hog.'

'My poor darling! They must have abused you horribly.'

'Dunno quite. Well, after that, I saw a light.'

Cheyne slapped his leg and chuckled. This was going to be a boy after his own hungry heart. He had never seen precisely that twinkle in Harvey's eye before.

'And the old man gave me ten and a half a month; he's paid me half now; and I took hold with Dan and pitched right in. I can't do a man's work yet. But I can handle a dory 'most as well as Dan, and I don't get rattled in a fog—much; and I can take my trick in light winds—that's steering, dear—and I can 'most bait up a trawl, and I know my ropes, of course; and I can pitch fish till the cows come home, and I'm great on old Josephus, and I'll show you how I can clear coffee with a piece of fish-skin and—I think I'll have another

cup, please. Say, you've no notion what a heap of work there is in ten and a half a month!'

'I began with eight and a half, my son,' said Cheyne.

'That so? You never told me, sir.'

'You never asked, Harve. I'll tell you about it some day, if you care to listen. Try a stuffed olive.'

'Troop says the most interesting thing in the world is to find out how the next man gets his vittles. It's great to have a trimmed-up meal again. We were well fed, though. Best mug on the Banks. Disko fed us first-class. He's a great man. And Dan—that's his son—Dan's my partner. And there's Uncle Salters and his manures, an' he reads Josephus. He's sure I'm crazy yet. And there's poor little Penn, and he is crazy. You mustn't talk to him about Johnstown, because—And oh, you must know Tom Platt and Long Jack and Manuel. Manuel saved my life. I'm sorry he's a Portuguee. He can't talk much, but he's an everlasting musician. He found me struck adrift and drifting, and hauled me in.'

'I wonder your nervous system isn't completely wrecked,' said Mrs. Cheyne.

'What for, mamma? I worked like a horse and I ate like a hog and I slept like a dead man.'

That was too much for Mrs. Cheyne, who began to think of her visions of a corpse rocking on the salty seas. She went to her state-room, and Harvey curled up beside his father, explaining his indebtedness.

'You can depend upon me to do everything I can for the crowd, Harve. They seem to be good men on your showing.'

'Best in the fleet, sir. Ask at Gloucester,' said Harvey. 'But Disko believes still he's cured me of being

crazy. Dan's the only one I've let on to about you, and our private cars and all the rest of it, and I'm not quite sure Dan believes. I want to paralyse 'em to-morrow. Say, can't they run the "Constance" over to Gloucester? Mamma don't look fit to be moved, anyway, and we're bound to finish cleaning out by to-morrow. Wouverman takes our fish. You see, we're first off the Banks this season, and it's four twenty-five a quintal. We held out till he paid it. They want it quick.'

'You mean you'll have to work to-morrow, then?'

'I told Troop I would. I'm on the scales. I've brought the tallies with me.' He looked at the greasy note-book with an air of importance that made his father choke. 'There isn't but three—no—two ninety-four or five quintal more by my reckoning.'

'Hire a substitute,' suggested Cheyne, to see what Harvey would say.

'Can't, sir. I'm tally-man for the schooner. Troop says I've a better head for figures than Dan. Troop's a mighty just man.'

'Well, suppose I don't move the "Constance" to-night, how'll you fix it?'

Harvey looked at the clock, which marked twenty past eleven.

'Then I'll sleep here till three and catch the four o'clock freight. They let us men from the fleet ride free as a rule.'

'That's a notion. But I think we can get the "Constance" around about as soon as your men's freight. Better go to bed now.'

Harvey spread himself on the sofa, kicked off his boots, and was asleep before his father could shade the electrics. Cheyne sat watching the young face under

the shadow of the arm thrown over the forehead, and among many things that occurred to him was the notion that he might perhaps have been neglectful as a father.

'One never knows when one's taking one's biggest risks,' he said. 'It might have been worse than drowning; but I don't think it has—I don't think it has. If it hasn't, I haven't enough to pay Troop, that's all. And I don't think it has.'

Morning brought a fresh sea breeze through the windows, the 'Constance' was side-tracked among freight-cars at Gloucester, and Harvey had gone to his business.

'Then he'll fall overboard again and be drowned,' the mother said bitterly.

'We'll go and look, ready to throw him a rope in case. You've never seen him working for his bread,' said the father.

'What nonsense! As if any one expected—'

'Well, the man that hired him did. He's about right, too.'

They went down between the stores full of fishermen's oilskins to Wouverman's wharf, where the 'We're Here' rode high, her Bank flag still flying, all hands busy as beavers in the glorious morning light. Disko stood by the main-hatch superintending Manuel, Penn, and Uncle Salters at the tackle. Dan was swinging the loaded baskets inboard as Long Jack and Tom Platt filled them, and Harvey, with a note-book, represented the skipper's interests before the clerk of the scales on the salt-sprinkled wharf-edge.

'Ready!' cried the voices below. 'Haul!' cried Disko. 'Hi!' said Manuel. 'Here!' said Dan, swinging the basket. Then they heard Harvey's voice, clear and fresh, checking the weights.

The last of the fish had been whipped out, and Harvey leaped from the string-piece six feet to a ratline, as the shortest way to hand Disko the tally, shouting, 'Two ninety-seven, and an empty hold!'

'What's total, Harve?' said Disko.

'Eight sixty-five. Three thousand six hundred and seventy-six dollars and a quarter. Wish I'd share as well as wage.'

'Well, I won't go so far as to say you hevn't deserved it, Harve. Don't you want to slip up to Wouverman's office, and take him our tallies?'

'Who's that boy?' said Cheyne to Dan, well used to all manner of questions from those idle imbeciles called summer boarders.

'Well, he's a kind o' supercargo,' was the answer. 'We picked him up struck adrift on the Banks. Fell overboard from a liner, he sez. He was a passenger. He's by way o' bein' a fisherman now.'

'Is he worth his keep?'

'Ye-ep. Dad, this man wants to know ef Harvey's worth his keep. Say, would you like to go aboard? We'll fix a ladder for her.'

'I should very much, indeed. 'Twon't hurt you, mamma, and you'll be able to see for yourself.'

The woman who could not lift her head a week ago scrambled down the ladder, and stood aghast amid the mess and tangle aft.

'Be you anyways interested in Harve?' said Disko.

'Well, ye-es.'

'He's a good boy, an' ketches right hold jest as he's bid. You've heard haow we found him? He was sufferin' from nervous prostration, I guess, 'r else his head had hit somethin', when we hauled him aboard. He's all

over that naow. Yes, this is the cabin. 'Tain't anyways in order, but you're quite welcome to look round. Those are his figures on the stove-pipe, where we keep the reckonin' mostly.'

'Did he sleep here?' said Mrs, Cheyne, sitting on a yellow locker and surveying the disorderly bunks.

'No. He berthed forward, madam, an' only fer him an' my boy hookin' fried pies an' muggin' up when they ought to ha' been asleep, I dunno as I've any special fault to find with him.'

'There weren't nothin' wrong with Harve,' said Uncle Salters, descending the steps. 'He hung my boots on the main-truck, and he ain't over an' above respectful to such as knows more'n he do, 'specially about farmin'; but he were mostly misled by Dan.'

Dan in the meantime, profiting by dark hints from Harvey early that morning, was executing a war-dance on deck. 'Tom, Tom!' he whispered down the hatch. 'His folks has come, an' dad hain't caught on yet, an' they're pow-wowin' in the cabin. She's a daisy, an' he's all Harve claimed he was, by the looks of him.'

'Howly Smoke!' said Long Jack, climbing out covered with salt and fish-skin. 'D'ye belave his tale av the kid an' the little four-horse rig was thrue?'

'I knew it all along,' said Dan. 'Come an' see dad mistook in his judgments.'

They came delightedly, just in time to hear Cheyne say, 'I'm glad he has a good character, because—he's my son.'

Disko's jaw fell—Long Jack always vowed that he heard the click of it,—and he stared alternately at the man and the woman.

'I got his telegram in San Diego four days ago, and we came over.'

'In a private car?' said Dan. 'He said ye might.'

'In a private car, of course.'

Dan looked at his father with a hurricane of irreverent winks.

'There was a tale he tould us av drivin' four little ponies in a rig av his own,' said Long Jack. 'Was that thrue now?'

'Very likely,' said Cheyne. 'Was it, mamma?'

'He had a little drag of his own when we were in Toledo, I think,' said the mother.

Long Jack whistled. 'Oh, Disko,' said he, and that was all.

'I wuz—I am mistook in my jedgments—worse'n the men o' Marblehead,' said Disko, as though the words were being windlassed out of him. 'I don't mind ownin' to you, Mister Cheyne, as I mistrusted the boy to be crazy. He talked kinder odd about money.'

'So he told me.'

'Did he tell ye anything else? 'Cause I pounded him once.' This with a somewhat anxious glance at Mrs. Cheyne.

'Oh, yes,' Cheyne replied. 'I should say it probably did him more good than anything else in the world.'

'I jedged 'twuz necessary, er I wouldn't ha' done it. I don't want you to think we abuse our boys any on this packet.'

'I don't think you do, Mr. Troop.'

Mrs. Cheyne had been looking at the faces—Disko's ivory-yellow, hairless, iron countenance; Uncle Salters's with its rim of agricultural hair; Penn's bewildered simplicity; Manuel's quiet smile; Long Jack's grin of delight, and Tom Platt's scar. Rough, by her standards, they

certainly were; but she had a mother's wits in her eyes, and she rose with outstretched hands.

'Oh, tell me, which is who,' said she, half sobbing. 'I want to thank you and bless you—all of you.'

'Faith, that pays me a hunder time,' said Long Jack.

Disko introduced them all in due form. The captain of an old-time Chinaman could have done no better, and Mrs. Cheyne babbled incoherently. She nearly threw herself into Manuel's arms when she understood that he had first found Harvey.

'But how shall I leave him dreeft?' said poor Manuel. 'What do you yourself if you find him so? Eh, wha-at? We are in one good boy, and I am ever so pleased he come to be your son.'

'And he told me Dan was his partner!' she cried. Dan was already sufficiently pink, but he turned a rich crimson when Mrs. Cheyne kissed him on both cheeks before the assembly. Then they led her forward to show her the foc'sle, at which she wept again, and must needs go down to see Harvey's identical bunk, and there she found the nigger cook cleaning up the stove, and he nodded as though she were some one he had expected to meet for years. They tried, two at a time, to explain the boat's daily life to her, and she sat by the pawl-post, her gloved hands on the greasy table, laughing with trembling lips and crying with dancing eyes.

'And who's ever to use the "We're Here" after this?' said Long Jack to Tom Platt. 'I feel as if she'd made a cathedral av ut all.'

'Cathedral!' sneered Tom Platt. 'Oh, if it had bin even the Fish C'mission boat instid o' this bally-hoo o' blazes. Ef we only hed some decency an' order an' side-boys when she goes over. She'll have to climb

that ladder like a hen, an' we—we ought to be mannin' the yards!'

'Then Harvey was not mad,' said Penn slowly to Cheyne.

'No, indeed—thank God,' the big millionaire replied, stooping down tenderly.

'It must be terrible to be mad. Except to lose your child, I do not know anything more terrible. But your child has come back? Let us thank God for that.'

'Hello!' said Harvey, looking down upon them benignly from the wharf.

'I wuz mistook, Harve. I wuz mistook,' said Disko swiftly, holding up a hand. 'I wuz mistook in my jedgments. Ye needn't rub it in any more.'

'Guess I'll take care o' that,' said Dan, under his breath.

'You'll be goin' off naow, won't ye?'

'Well, not without the balance of my wages 'less you want to have the "We're Here" attached.'

'Thet's so; I'd clean forgot,' and he counted out the remaining dollars. 'You done all you contracted to do, Harve; and you done it baout's well as ef you'd been brought up—' Here Disko brought himself up. He did not quite see where the sentence was going to end.

'Outside of a private car?' suggested Dan wickedly.

'Come on, and I'll show her to you,' said Harvey.

Cheyne stayed to talk to Disko, but the others made a procession to the depot, with Mrs. Cheyne at the head. The French maid shrieked at the invasion; and Harvey laid the glories of the 'Constance' before them without a word. They took them in in equal silence—stamped leather, silver doorhandles and rails, cut velvet, plate-glass, nickel, bronze, hammered iron, and the rare woods of the continent inlaid.

'I told you,' said Harvey; 'I told you.' This was his crowning revenge, and a most ample one.

Mrs. Cheyne decreed a meal; and that nothing might be lacking to the tale Long Jack told afterwards in his boarding-house, she waited on them herself. Men who are accustomed to eat at tiny tables in howling gales have curiously neat and finished table-manners; but Mrs. Cheyne, who did not know this, was surprised. She longed to have Manuel for a butler; so silently and easily did he comport himself among the frail glass-ware and dainty silver. Tom Platt remembered great days on the 'Ohio,' and the manners of foreign potentates who dined with the officers; and Long Jack, being Irish, supplied the small talk till all were at their ease.

In the 'We're Here's' cabin the fathers took stock of each other behind their cigars. Cheyne knew well enough when he dealt with a man to whom he could not offer money; equally well he knew that no money could pay for what Disko had done. He kept his own counsel and waited for an opening.

'I hevn't done anything to your boy or fer your boy excep' make him work a piece an' learn him how to handle the hog-yoke,' said Disko. 'He has twice my boy's head for figgers.'

'By the way,' Cheyne answered casually, 'what d'you calculate to make of your boy?'

Disko removed his cigar and waved it comprehensively round the cabin. 'Dan's jest plain boy, an' he don't allow me to do any of his thinkin'. He'll hev this able little packet when I'm laid by. He ain't noways anxious to quit the business. I know that.'

'Mmm! Ever been West, Mr. Troop?'

'Bin's fer ez Noo York once in a boat. I've no use

for railroads; no more hez Dan. Salt water's good enough fer the Troops. I've been 'most everywhere—in the nat'ral way, o' course.'

'I can give him all the salt water he's likely to need—till he's a skipper.'

'Haow's that? I thought you wuz a kinder railroad king. Harve told me so when—I was mistook in my jedgments.'

'We're all apt to be mistaken. I fancied perhaps you might know I own a line of tea-clippers—San Francisco to Yokohama. Six of 'em—iron-built, about seventeen hundred and eighty tons apiece.'

'Blame that boy! He never told. I'd ha' listened to that, instid o' his truck abaout railroads an' pony carriages.'

'He didn't know.'

'Little thing like that slipped his mind, I guess.'

'No, I only capt—took hold of the "Blue M." freighters—Morgan and M'Quade's old line—this summer.'

Disko collapsed where he sat, beside the stove.

'Great Cæsar Almighty! I mistrust I've bin fooled from one end to the other. Why, Phil Airheart he went from this very town six year back—no, seven—an' he's mate on the "San Jose" now—twenty-six days was her time out. His sister she's livin' here yet, an' she reads his letters to my woman. An' you own the "Blue M." freighters?'

Cheyne nodded.

'If I'd known that I'd ha' jerked the "We're Here" back to port all standin', on the word.'

'Perhaps that wouldn't have been so good for Harvey.'

'Ef I'd only known! Ef he'd only said about the cussed Line, I'd ha' understood! I'll never stand on

my own jedgments again—never. They're well-found packets. Phil Airheart he says so.'

'I'm glad to have a recommend from that quarter. Airheart's skipper of the "San Jose" now. What I was getting at is to know whether you'd lend me Dan for a year or two, and we'll see if we can't make a mate of him. Would you trust him to Airheart?'

'It's a resk taking a raw boy—'

'I know a man who did more for me.'

'That's diff'runt. Look at here naow, I ain't recommendin' Dan special because he's my own flesh an' blood. I know Bank ways ain't clipper ways, but he hain't much to learn. Steer he can—no boy better, if I say it—an' the rest's in our blood an' get; but I could wish he warn't so cussed weak on navigation.'

'Airheart will attend to that. He'll ship as a boy for a voyage or two, and then we can put him in the way of doing better. Suppose you take him in hand this winter, and I'll send for him early in the spring. I know the Pacific's a long ways off—'

'Pshaw! We Troops, livin' an' dead, are all around the earth an' the seas thereof.'

'But I want you to understand—and I mean this—any time you think you'd like to see him, tell me, and I'll attend to the transportation. 'Twon't cost you a cent.'

'Ef you'll walk a piece with me, we'll go to my house an' talk this to my woman. I've bin so crazy mistook in all my jedgments, it don't seem to me this was like to be real.'

They went over to Troop's eighteen-hundred-dollar, blue-trimmed white house, with a retired dory full of nasturtiums in the front yard and a shuttered parlour which was a museum of oversea plunder. There sat a

large woman, silent and grave, with the dim eyes of those who look long to sea for the return of their beloved. Cheyne addressed himself to her, and she gave consent wearily.

'We lose one hundred a year from Gloucester only, Mr. Cheyne,' she said—'one hundred boys an' men; and I've come so's to hate the sea as if 'twuz alive an' listenin'. God never made it fer humans to anchor on. These packets o' yours, they go straight out, I take it, and straight home again?'

'As straight as the winds let 'em, and I give a bonus for record passages. Tea don't improve by being at sea.'

'When he wuz little he used to play at keeping store, an' I had hopes he might follow that up. But soon's he could paddle a dory, I knew that were goin' to be denied me.'

'They're square-riggers, mother; iron-built an' well found. Remember what Phil's sister reads you when she gits his letters.'

'I've never known as Phil told lies, but he's too venturesome (like most of 'em that use the sea). Ef Dan sees fit, Mr. Cheyne, he can go—fer all o' me.'

'She jest despises the ocean,' Disko explained, 'an' I —I dunno haow to act polite, I guess, er I'd thank you better.'

'My father—my own eldest brother—two nephews —an' my second sister's man,' she said, dropping her head on her hand. 'Would you care fer any one that took all those?'

Cheyne was relieved when Dan turned up and accepted with more delight than he was able to put into words. Indeed, the offer meant a plain and sure road to all desirable things; but Dan thought most of com-

manding watch on broad decks, and looking into far-away harbours.

Mrs. Cheyne had spoken privately to the unaccountable Manuel in the matter of Harvey's rescue. He seemed to have no desire for money. Pressed hard, he said that he would take five dollars, because he wanted to buy something for a girl. Otherwise—'How shall I take money when I make so easy my eats and smokes? You will giva some if I like or no? Eh, wha-at? Then you shall giva me money, but not that way. You shall giva all you can think.' He introduced her to a snuffy Portuguese priest with a list of semi-destitute widows as long as his cassock. As a strict Unitarian, Mrs. Cheyne could not sympathise with the creed, but she ended by respecting the brown, voluble little man.

Manuel, faithful son of the Church, appropriated all the blessings showered on her for her charity. 'That letta me out,' said he. 'I have now ver' good absolutions for six months'; and he strolled forth to get a handkerchief for the girl of the hour and to break the hearts of all the others.

Salters went West for a season with Penn, and left no address behind. He had a dread that these millionary people, with wasteful private cars, might take undue interest in his companion. It was better to visit inland relatives till the coast was clear. 'Never you be adopted by rich folk, Penn,' he said in the cars, 'or I'll take'n break this checker-board over your head. Ef you forgit your name agin—which is Pratt—you remember you belong with Salters Troop, an' set down right where you are till I come fer you. Don't go taggin' araound after them whose eyes bung out with fatness, accordin' to Scripcher.'

CHAPTER X

BUT it was otherwise with the 'We're Here's' silent cook, for he came up, his kit in a handkerchief, and boarded the 'Constance.' Pay was no particular object, and he did not in the least care where he slept. His business, as revealed to him in dreams, was to follow Harvey for the rest of his days. They tried argument and, at last, persuasion; but there is a difference between one Cape Breton and two Alabama negroes, and the matter was referred to Cheyne by the cook and porter. The millionaire only laughed. He presumed Harvey might need a body-servant some day or other, and was sure that one volunteer was worth five hirelings. Let the man stay, therefore; even though he called himself MacDonald and swore in Gaelic. The car could go back to Boston, whence, if he were still of the same mind, they would take him West.

With the 'Constance,' which in his heart of hearts he loathed, departed the last remnant of Cheyne's millionairedom, and he gave himself up to an energetic idleness. This Gloucester was a new town in a new land, and he purposed to 'take it in,' as of old he had taken in all the cities from Snohomish to San Diego of that world whence he hailed. They made money along the crooked street which was half wharf and half ship's store: as a leading professional he wished to learn how the noble game was

played. Men said that four out of every five fish-balls served at New England's Sunday breakfast came from Gloucester, and overwhelmed him with figures in proof —statistics of boats, gear, wharf-frontage, capital invested, salting, packing, factories, insurance, wages, repairs, and profits. He talked with the owners of the large fleets whose skippers were little more than hired men, and whose crews were almost all Swedes or Portuguese. Then he conferred with Disko, one of the few who owned their craft, and compared notes in his vast head. He coiled himself away on chain-cables in marine junk-shops, asking questions with cheerful, unslaked Western curiosity till all the water-front wanted to know 'what in thunder that man was after, anyhow.' He prowled into the Mutual Insurance rooms, and demanded explanations of the mysterious remarks chalked up on the blackboard day by day; and that brought down upon him secretaries of every Fisherman's Widow and Orphan Aid Society within the city limits. They begged shamelessly, each man anxious to beat the other institution's record, and Cheyne tugged at his beard and handed them all over to Mrs. Cheyne.

She was resting in a boarding-house near Eastern Point—a strange establishment, managed apparently by the boarders, where the tablecloths were red and white checkered, and the population, who seemed to have known one another intimately for years, rose up at midnight to make Welsh rarebits if it felt hungry. On the second morning of her stay Mrs. Cheyne put away her diamond solitaires before she came down to breakfast.

'They're most delightful people,' she confided to her husband; 'so friendly and simple, too, though they are all Boston, nearly.'

'That isn't simpleness, mamma,' he said, looking across the boulders behind the apple-trees where the hammocks were slung. 'It's the other thing, that we—that I haven't got.'

'It can't be,' said Mrs. Cheyne quietly. 'There isn't a woman here owns a dress that cost a hundred dollars. Why, we—'

'I know it, dear. We have—of course we have. I guess it's only the style they wear East. Are you having a good time?'

'I don't see very much of Harvey; he's always with you; but I ain't near as nervous as I was.'

'I haven't had such a good time since Willie died. I never rightly understood that I had a son before this. Harve's got to be a great boy. Anything I can fetch you, dear? Cushion under your head? Well, we'll go down to the wharf again and look around.'

Harvey was his father's shadow in those days, and the two strolled along side by side, Cheyne using the grades as an excuse for laying his hand on the boy's square shoulder. It was then that Harvey noticed and admired what had never struck him before—his father's curious power of getting at the heart of new matters as learned from men in the street.

'How d'you make 'em tell you everything without opening your head?' demanded the son, as they came out of a rigger's loft.

'I've dealt with quite a few men in my time, Harve, and one sizes 'em up somehow, I guess. I know something about myself, too.' Then, after a pause, as they sat down on a wharf-edge, 'Men can 'most always tell when a man has handled things for himself, and then they treat him as one of themselves.'

'Same as they treat me down at Wouverman's wharf. I'm one of the crowd now. Disko has told every one I've earned my pay.' Harvey spread out his hands and rubbed the palms together. 'They're all soft again,' he said dolefully.

'Keep 'em that way for the next few years, while you're getting your education. You can harden 'em up after.'

'Ye-es, I suppose so,' was the reply, in no delighted voice.

'It rests with you, Harve. You can take cover behind your mamma, of course, and put her on to fussing about your nerves and your high-strungness and all that kind of poppy-cock.'

'Have I ever done that?' said Harvey uneasily.

His father turned where he sat and thrust out a long hand. 'You know as well as I do that I can't make anything of you if you don't act straight by me. I can handle you alone if you'll stay alone, but I don't pretend to manage both you and mamma. Life's too short, anyway.'

'Don't make me out much of a fellow, does it?'

'I guess it was my fault a good deal; but if you want the truth, you haven't been much of anything up to date. Now, have you?'

'Umm! Disko thinks. . . . Say, what d'you reckon it's cost you to raise me from the start—first, last, and all over?'

Cheyne smiled. 'I've never kept track, but I should estimate, in dollars and cents, nearer fifty than forty thousand; maybe sixty. The young generation comes high. It has to have things, and it tires of 'em, and—the old man foots the bill.'

Harvey whistled, but at heart he was rather pleased to think that his upbringing had cost so much. 'And all that's sunk capital, isn't it?'

'Invested, Harve. Invested, I hope.'

'Making it only thirty thousand, the thirty I've earned is about ten cents on the hundred. That's a mighty poor catch.' Harvey wagged his head solemnly.

Cheyne laughed till he nearly fell off the pile into the water.

'Disko has got a heap more than that out of Dan since he was ten; and Dan's at school half the year, too.'

'Oh, that's what you're after, is it?'

'No, I'm not after anything. I'm not stuck on myself any just now—that's all. . . . I ought to be kicked.'

'I can't do it, old man; or I would, I presume, if I'd been made that way.'

'Then I'd have remembered it to the last day I lived —and never forgiven you,' said Harvey, his chin on his doubled fists.

'Exactly. That's about what I'd do. You see?'

'I see. The fault's with me and no one else. All the samey, something's got to be done about it.'

Cheyne drew a cigar from his vest pocket, bit off the end, and fell to smoking. Father and son were very much alike; for the beard hid Cheyne's mouth, and Harvey had his father's slightly aquiline nose, close-set black eyes, and narrow, high cheek-bones. With a touch of brown paint he would have made up very picturesquely as a Red Indian of the story-books.

'Now you can go on from here,' said Cheyne slowly, 'costing me between six and eight thousand a year till you're a voter. Well, we'll call you a man then. You

can go right on from that, living on me to the tune of forty or fifty thousand, besides what your mother will give you, with a valet and a yacht or a fancy ranch where you can pretend to raise trotting stock and play cards with your own crowd.'

'Like Torry Tuck?' Harvey put in.

'Yep; or the two De Vitre boys or old man M'Quade's son. California's full of 'em, and here's an Eastern sample while we're talking.'

A shiny black steam yacht, with mahogany deck-house, nickel-plated binnacles, and pink and white striped awnings, puffed up the harbour, flying the burgee of some New York club. Two young men in what they conceived to be sea costumes were playing cards by the saloon skylight, and a couple of women with red and blue parasols looked on and laughed noisily.

'Shouldn't care to be caught out in her in any sort of a breeze. No beam,' said Harvey critically, as the yacht slowed to pick up her mooring-buoy.

'They're having what stands them for a good time. I can give you that, and twice as much as that, Harve. How d'you like it?'

'Cæsar! That's no way to get a dinghy over-side,' said Harvey, still intent on the yacht. 'If I couldn't slip a tackle better than that I'd stay ashore. . . . What if I don't?'

'Stay ashore—or what?'

'Yacht and ranch and live on "the old man," and—get behind mamma when there's trouble,' said Harvey, with a twinkle in his eye.

'Why, in that case, you come right in with me, my son.'

'Ten dollars a month?' Another twinkle.

'Not a cent more until you're worth it, and you won't begin to touch that for a few years.'

'I'd sooner begin sweeping out the office—isn't that how the big bugs start?—and touch something now than—'

'I know it; we all feel that way. But I guess we can hire any sweeping we need. I made the same mistake myself of starting in too soon.'

'Thirty million dollars' worth o' mistake, wasn't it? I'd risk it for that.'

'I lost some; and I gained some. I'll tell you.'

Cheyne pulled his beard, and smiled as he looked over the still water, and spoke away from Harvey, who presently began to be aware that his father was telling the story of his life. He talked in a low, even voice, without gesture and without expression, and it was a history for which a dozen leading journals would cheerfully have paid many dollars—the story of forty years that was at the same time the story of the New West, whose story is yet to be written.

It began with a kinless boy turned loose in Texas, and went on fantastically through a hundred changes and chops of life, the scenes shifting from State after Western State, from cities that sprang up in a month and in a season utterly withered away, to wild ventures in wilder camps that are now laborious paved municipalities. It covered the building of three railroads and the deliberate wreck of a fourth. It told of steamers, townships, forests, and mines, and the men of every nation under heaven, manning, creating, hewing, and digging these. It touched on chances of gigantic wealth flung before eyes that could not see, or missed by the merest accident of time and travel; and through the mad shift

of things, sometimes on horseback, more often afoot, now rich, now poor, in and out, and back and forth, deck-hand, train-hand, contractor, boarding-house keeper, journalist, engineer, drummer, real-estate agent, politician, dead-beat, rum-seller, mine-owner, speculator, cattleman, or tramp, moved Harvey Cheyne, alert and quiet, seeking his own ends, and, so he said, the glory and advancement of his country.

He told of the faith that never deserted him, even when he hung on the ragged edge of despair—the faith that comes of knowing men and things. He enlarged, as though he were talking to himself, on his very great courage and resource at all times. The thing was so evident in the man's mind that he never even changed his tone. He described how he had bested his enemies, or forgiven them, exactly as they had bested or forgiven him in those careless days; how he had entreated, cajoled, and bullied towns, companies, and syndicates, all for their enduring good; crawled round, through, or under mountains and ravines, dragging a string and hoop-iron railroad after him, and in the end, how he had sat still while promiscuous communities tore the last fragments of his character to shreds.

The tale held Harvey almost breathless, his head a little cocked to one side, his eyes fixed on his father's face, as the twilight deepened and the red cigar-end lit up the furrowed cheeks and heavy eyebrows. It seemed to him like watching a locomotive storming across country in the dark—a mile between each glare of the opened fire-door; but this locomotive could talk, and the words shook and stirred the boy to the core of his soul. At last Cheyne pitched away the cigar-butt, and the two sat in the dark over the lapping water.

'I've never told that to any one before,' said the father.

Harvey gasped. 'It's just the greatest thing that ever was!' said he.

'That's what I got. Now I'm coming to what I didn't get. It won't sound much of anything to you, but I don't wish you to be as old as I am before you find out. I can handle men, of course, and I'm no fool along my own lines, but—but—I can't compete with the man who has been taught! I've picked up as I went along, and I guess it sticks out all over me.'

'I've never seen it,' said the son indignantly.

'You will, though, Harve. You will—just as soon as you're through college. Don't I know it? Don't I know the look on men's faces when they think me a—a "mucker," as they call it out here? I can break them to little pieces—yes—but I can't get back at 'em to hurt 'em where they live. I don't say they're 'way 'way up, but I feel I'm 'way, 'way, 'way off, somehow. Now you've got your chance. You've got to soak up all the learning that's around, and you'll live with a crowd that are doing the same thing. They'll be doing it for a few thousand dollars a year at most; but remember you'll be doing it for millions. You'll learn law enough to look after your own property when I'm out o' the light, and you'll have to be solid with the best men in the market (they are useful later); and above all, you'll have to stow away the plain, common, sit-down-with-your-chin-on-your-elbows book-learning. Nothing pays like that, Harve, and it's bound to pay more and more each year in our country—in business and in politics. You'll see.'

'There's no sugar my end of the deal,' said Harvey.

'Four years at college! Wish I'd chosen the valet and the yacht!'

'Never mind, my son,' Cheyne insisted. 'You're investing your capital where it'll bring in the best returns; and I guess you won't find our property shrunk any when you're ready to take hold. Think it over, and let me know in the morning. Hurry! We'll be late for supper!'

As this was a business talk, there was no need for Harvey to tell his mother about it; and Cheyne naturally took the same point of view. But Mrs. Cheyne saw and feared, and was a little jealous. Her boy, who rode rough-shod over her, was gone, and in his stead reigned a keen-faced youth, abnormally silent, who addressed most of his conversation to his father. She understood it was business, and therefore a matter beyond her premises. If she had any doubts, they were resolved when Cheyne went to Boston and brought back a new diamond marquise ring.

'What have you two men been doing now?' she said, with a weak little smile, as she turned it in the light.

'Talking—just talking, mamma; there's nothing mean about Harvey.'

There was not. The boy had made a treaty on his own account. Railroads, he explained gravely, interested him as little as lumber, real estate, or mining. What his soul yearned after was control of his father's newly-purchased sailing-ships. If that could be promised him within what he conceived to be a reasonable time, he, for his part, guaranteed diligence and sobriety at college for four or five years. In vacation he was to be allowed full access to all details connected with the line,—he had asked not more than two thousand ques-

tions about it,—from his father's most private papers in the safe to the tug in San Francisco harbour.

'It's a deal,' said Cheyne at the last. 'You'll alter your mind twenty times before you leave college, o' course; but if you take hold of it in proper shape, and if you don't tie it up before you're twenty-three, I'll make the thing over to you. How's that, Harve?'

'Nope; never pays to split up a going concern. There's too much competition in the world anyway, and Disko says "blood-kin hev to stick together." His crowd never go back on him. That's one reason, he says, why they make such big fares. Say, the "We're Here" goes off to the Georges on Monday. They don't stay long ashore, do they?'

'Well, we ought to be going too, I guess. I've left my business hung up at loose ends between two oceans, and it's time to connect again. I just hate to do it, though; haven't had a holiday like this for twenty years.'

'We can't go without seeing Disko off,' said Harvey; 'and Monday's Memorial Day. Let's stay over that, anyway.'

'What is this memorial business? They were talking about it at the boarding-house,' said Cheyne weakly. He, too, was not anxious to spoil the golden days.

'Well, as far as I can make out, this business is a sort of song-and-dance act, whacked up for the summer boarders. Disko don't think much of it, he says, because they take up a collection for the widows and orphans. Disko's independent. Haven't you noticed that?'

'Well—yes. A little. In spots. It is a town show, then?'

'The summer convention is. They read out the

names of the fellows drowned or gone astray since last time, and they make speeches, and recite, and all. Then, Disko says, the secretaries of the Aid Societies go into the back yard and fight over the catch. The real show, he says, is in the spring. The ministers all take a hand then, and there aren't any summer boarders around.'

'I see,' said Cheyne, with the brilliant and perfect comprehension of one born into and bred up to city pride. 'We'll stay over for Memorial Day, and get off in the afternoon.'

'Guess I'll go down to Disko's and make him bring his crowd up before they sail. I'll have to stand with them, of course.'

'Oh, that's it, is it?' said Cheyne. 'I'm only a poor summer boarder, and you're—'

'A Banker—full-blooded Banker,' Harvey called back as he boarded a trolley, and Cheyne went on with his blissful dreams for the future.

Disko had no use for public functions where appeals were made for charity, but Harvey pleaded that the glory of the day would be lost, so far as he was concerned, if the 'We're Heres' absented themselves. Then Disko made conditions. He had heard—it was astonishing how all the world knew all the world's business along the water-front—he had heard that a 'Philadelphia actress-woman' was going to take part in the exercises; and he mistrusted that she would deliver 'Skipper Ireson's Ride.' Personally, he had as little use for actresses as for summer boarders; but justice was justice, and though he himself (here Dan giggled) had once slipped up on a matter of judgment, this thing must not be. So Harvey came back to East Gloucester and spent half a day explaining to an amused actress with a royal repu-

tation on two seaboards the inwardness of the mistake she contemplated; and she admitted that it was justice, even as Disko had said.

Cheyne knew by old experience what would happen; but anything of the nature of a public palaver was meat and drink to the man's soul. He saw the trolleys hurrying west, in the hot, hazy morning, full of women in light summer dresses, and white-faced, straw-hatted men fresh from Boston desks; the stack of bicycles outside the post office; the come-and-go of busy officials, greeting one another; the slow flick and swash of bunting in the heavy air; and the important man with a hose sluicing the brick sidewalk.

'Mother,' he said suddenly, 'don't you remember—after Seattle was burned out—and they got her going again?'

Mrs. Cheyne nodded, and looked critically down the crooked street. Like her husband, she understood these gatherings, all the West over, and compared them one against another. The fishermen began to mingle with the crowd about the town-hall doors—blue-jowled Portuguese, their women bare-headed or shawled for the most part; clear-eyed Nova Scotians, and men of the Maritime Provinces; French, Italians, Swedes, and Danes, with outside crews of coasting schooners; and everywhere women in black, who saluted one another with a gloomy pride, for this was their day of great days. And there were ministers of many creeds—pastors of great, gilt-edged congregations, at the seaside for a rest, with shepherds of the regular work,—from the priests of the Church on the Hill to bush-bearded ex-sailor Lutherans, hail-fellow with the men of a score of boats. There were owners of lines of schooners, large contribu-

tors to the societies, and small men, their few craft pawned to the mastheads, with bankers and marine-insurance agents, captains of tugs and water-boats, riggers, fitters, lumpers, salters, boat-builders, and coopers, and all the mixed population of the water-front.

They drifted along the line of seats made gay with the dresses of the summer boarders, and one of the town officials patrolled and perspired till he shone all over with pure civic pride. Cheyne had met him for five minutes a few days before, and between the two there was entire understanding.

'Well, Mr. Cheyne, and what d'you think of our city? —Yes, madam, you can sit anywhere you please.— You have this kind of thing out West, I presume?'

'Yes, but we aren't as old as you.'

'That's so, of course. You ought to have been at the exercises when we celebrated our two hundred and fiftieth birthday. I tell you, Mr. Cheyne, the old city did herself credit.'

'So I heard. It pays, too. What's the matter with the town that it don't have a first-class hotel, though?'

' —Right over there to the left, Pedro. Heaps o' room for you and your crowd.— Why, that's what I tell 'em all the time, Mr Cheyne. There's big money in it, but I presume that don't affect you any. What we want is— '

A heavy hand fell on his broadcloth shoulder, and the flushed skipper of a Portland coal-and-ice coaster spun him half round. 'What in thunder do you fellows mean by clappin' the law on the town when all decent men are at sea this way? Heh? Town's dry's a bone, an' smells a sight worse sence I quit. 'Might ha' left us one saloon, anyway.'

'Don't seem to have hindered your nourishment this morning, Carsen. I'll go into the politics of it later. Sit down by the door and think over your arguments till I come back.'

'What good's arguments to me? In Miquelon champagne's eighteen dollars a case, and— ' The skipper lurched into his seat as an organ-prelude silenced him.

'Our new organ,' said the official proudly to Cheyne. 'Cost us four thousand dollars, too. We'll have to get back to high-license next year to pay for it. I wasn't going to let the ministers have all the religion at their convention. Those are some of our orphans standing up to sing. My wife taught 'em. See you again later, Mr. Cheyne. I'm wanted on the platform.'

High, clear, and true, children's voices bore down the last noise of those settling into their places.

'O all ye Works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord: praise Him, and magnify Him for ever!'

The women throughout the hall leaned forward to look as the reiterated cadences filled the air. Mrs. Cheyne, with some others, began to breathe short; she had hardly imagined there were so many widows in the world; and instinctively searched for Harvey. He had found the 'We're Heres' at the back of the audience, and was standing, as by right, between Dan and Disko. Uncle Salters, returned the night before with Penn, from Pamlico Sound, received him suspiciously.

'Hain't your folk gone yet?' he grunted. 'What are you doin' here, young feller?'

'O ye Seas and Floods, bless ye the Lord: praise Him, and magnify Him for ever!'

'Hain't he good right?' said Dan. 'He's bin there, same as the rest of us.'

'Not in them clothes,' Salters snarled.

'Shut your head, Salters,' said Disko. 'Your bile's gone back on you. Stay right where ye are, Harve.'

Then up and spoke the orator of the occasion, another pillar of the municipality, bidding the world welcome to Gloucester, and incidentally pointing out wherein Gloucester excelled the rest of the world. Then he turned to the sea-wealth of the city, and spoke of the price that must be paid for the yearly harvest. They would hear later the names of their lost dead—one hundred and seventeen of them. (The widows stared a little, and looked at one another here.) Gloucester could not boast any overwhelming mills or factories. Her sons worked for such wage as the sea gave; and they all knew that neither Georges nor the Banks were cow-pastures. The utmost that folk ashore could accomplish was to help the widows and the orphans; and after a few general remarks he took this opportunity of thanking, in the name of the city, those who had so public-spiritedly consented to participate in the exercises of the occasion.

'I jest despise the beggin' pieces in it,' growled Disko. 'It don't give folk a fair notion of us.'

'Ef folk won't be fore-handed an' put by when they've the chance,' returned Salters, 'it stands in the nature o' things they hev to be 'shamed. You take warnin' by that, young feller. Riches endureth but for a season, ef you scatter them araound on lugsuries—'

'But to lose everything—everything,' said Penn. 'What can you do then? Once I'—the watery-blue eyes stared up and down, as if looking for something to

steady them—'once I read—in a book, I think—of a boat where every one was run down—except some one—and he said to me—'

'Shucks!' said Salters, cutting in. 'You read a little less an' take more int'rust in your vittles, and you'll come nearer earnin' your keep, Penn.'

Harvey, jammed among the fishermen, felt a creepy, crawly, tingling thrill that began in the back of his neck and ended at his boots. He was cold, too, though it was a stifling day.

''That the actress from Philadelphia?' said Disko Troop, scowling at the platform. 'You've fixed it about old man Ireson, hain't ye, Harve? Ye know why naow.'

It was not 'Ireson's Ride' that the woman delivered, but some sort of poem about a fishing-port called Brixham and a fleet of trawlers beating in against storm by night, while the women made a guiding fire at the head of the quay with everything they could lay hands on.

'They took the grandam's blanket,
Who shivered and bade them go;
They took the baby's cradle,
Who could not say them no.'

'Whew!' said Dan, peering over Long Jack's shoulder. 'That's great! Must ha' bin expensive, though.'

'Ground-hog case,' said the Galway man. 'Badly lighted port, Danny.'

'. . . . . .
And knew not all the while
If they were lighting a bonfire
Or only a funeral pile.'

The wonderful voice took hold of the people by their heartstrings; and when she told how the drenched crews were flung ashore, living and dead, and they carried the bodies to the glare of the fires, asking: 'Child, is this your father?' or 'Wife, is this your man?' you could hear hard breathing all over the benches.

'And when the boats of Brixham
Go out to face the gales,
Think of the love that travels
Like light upon their sails!'

There was very little applause when she finished. The women were looking for their handkerchiefs, and many of the men stared at the ceiling with shiny eyes.

'H'm,' said Salters; 'that 'ud cost ye a dollar to hear at any theater—maybe two. Some folk, I presoom, can afford it. Seems downright waste to me. . . . Naow, how in Jerusalem did Cap Bart Edwardes strike adrift here?'

'No keepin' him under,' said an Eastport man behind. 'He's a poet, an' he's baound to say his piece. Comes from daown aour way, too.'

He did not say that Captain B. Edwardes had striven for five consecutive years to be allowed to recite a piece of his own composition on Gloucester Memorial Day. An amused and exhausted committee had at last given him his desire. The simplicity and utter happiness of the old man, as he stood up in his very best Sunday clothes, won the audience ere he opened his mouth. They sat unmurmuring through seven-and-thirty hatchet-made verses describing at fullest length the loss of the schooner 'Joan Hasken' off the Georges in the

gale of 1867, and when he came to an end they shouted with one kindly throat.

A far-sighted Boston reporter slid away for a full copy of the epic and an interview with the author; so that earth had nothing more to offer Captain Bart Edwardes, ex-whaler, shipwright, master-fisherman, and poet, in the seventy-third year of his age.

'Naow, I call that sensible,' said the Eastport man. 'I've bin over that graound with his writin' jest as he read it, in my two hands, and I can testify that he's got it all in.'

'If Dan here couldn't do better'n that with one hand before breakfast, he ought to be switched,' said Salters, upholding the honour of Massachusetts on general principles. 'Not but what I'm free to own he's considerable litt'ery—fer Maine. Still— '

'Guess Uncle Salters goin' to die this trip. Fust compliment he's ever paid me,' Dan sniggered. 'What's wrong with you, Harve? You act all quiet and you look greenish. Feelin' sick?'

'Don't know what's the matter with me,' Harvey replied. ' 'Seems if my insides were too big for my outsides. I'm all crowded up and shivery.'

'Dispepsy? Pshaw—too bad. We'll wait for the readin', an' then we'll quit, an' catch the tide.'

The widows—they were nearly all of that season's making—braced themselves rigidly like people going to be shot in cold blood, for they knew what was coming. The summer-boarder girls in pink and blue shirt-waists stopped tittering over Captain Edwardes's wonderful poem, and looked back to see why all was silent. The fishermen pressed forward as that town official who had talked with Cheyne bobbed up on the platform and be-

gan to read the year's list of losses, dividing them into months. Last September's casualties were mostly single men and strangers, but his voice rang very loud in the stillness of the hall:

'9th September.—Schooner "Florrie Anderson" lost, with all aboard, off the Georges:

Reuben Pitman, master, 50, single, Main Street, City.

Emil Olsen, 19, single, 329 Hammond Street, City; Denmark.

Oscar Stanberg, single, 25, Sweden.

Carl Stanberg, single, 28, Main Street, City.

Pedro, supposed Madeira, single, Keene's boarding-house, City.

Joseph Welsh, alias Joseph Wright, 30, St. John's, Newfoundland.'

'No—Augusty, Maine,' a voice cried from the body of the hall.

'He shipped from St. John's,' said the reader, looking to see.

'I know it. He belongs in Augusty. My nevvy.'

The reader made a pencilled correction on the margin of the list, and resumed:

'Same schooner, Charlie Ritchie, Liverpool, Nova Scotia, 33, single.

Albert May, 267 Rogers Street, City, 27, single.

27th September.—Orvin Dollard, 30, married, drowned in dory off Eastern Point.'

That shot went home, for one of the widows flinched where she sat, clasping and unclasping her hands. Mrs. Cheyne, who had been listening with wide-opened eyes,

threw up her head and choked. Dan's mother, a few seats to the right, saw and heard and quickly moved to her side. The reading went on. By the time they reached the January and February wrecks the shots were falling thick and fast, and the widows drew breath between their teeth:

'14th February.—Schooner "Harry Randolph" dismasted on the way home from Newfoundland; Asa Musie, married, 32, Main Street, City, lost overboard.

23rd February.—Schooner "Gilbert Hope"; went astray in dory, Robert Beavon, 29, married, native of Pubnico, Nova Scotia.'

But his wife was in the hall. They heard a low cry, as though a little animal had been hit. It was stifled at once, and a girl staggered out of the hall. She had been hoping against hope for months, because some who have gone adrift in dories have been miraculously picked up by deep-sea sailing-ships. Now she had her certainty, and Harvey could see the policeman on the sidewalk hailing a hack for her. 'It's fifty cents to the depot'—the driver began, but the policeman held up his hand—'but I'm goin' there anyway. Jump right in. Look at here, Alf; you don't pull me next time my lamps ain't lit. See?'

The side-door closed on the patch of bright sunshine, and Harvey's eyes turned again to the reader and his endless list.

'19th April.—Schooner "Mamie Douglas" lost on the Banks with all hands.

Edward Canton, 43, master, married, City.

D. Hawkins, alias Williams, 34, married, Shelbourne, Nova Scotia.

G. W. Clay, coloured, 28, married, City.'

And so on, and so on. Great lumps were rising in Harvey's throat, and his stomach reminded him of the day when he fell from the liner.

'10th May.—Schooner "We're Here" [the blood tingled all over him]. Otto Svendson, 20, single, City, lost overboard.'

Once more a low, tearing cry from somewhere at the back of the hall.

'She shouldn't ha' come. She shouldn't ha' come,' said Long Jack, with a cluck of pity.

'Don't scrowge, Harve,' grunted Dan. Harvey heard that much, but the rest was all darkness spotted with fiery wheels. Disko leaned forward and spoke to his wife, where she sat with one arm round Mrs. Cheyne, and the other holding down the snatching, catching, ringed hands.

'Lean your head daown—right daown!' she whispered. 'It'll go off in a minute.'

'I ca-an't! I do-don't! Oh, let me—' Mrs. Cheyne did not at all know what she said.

'You must,' Mrs. Troop repeated. 'Your boy's jest fainted dead away. They do that some when they're gettin' their growth. Wish to tend to him? We can git aout this side. Quite quiet. You come right along with me. Psha', my dear, we're both women, I guess. We must tend to aour men-folk. Come!'

The 'We're Heres' promptly went through the crowd

as a bodyguard, and it was a very white and shaken Harvey that they propped up on a bench in an anteroom.

'Favours his ma,' was Mrs. Troop's only comment, as the mother bent over her boy.

'How d'you suppose he could ever stand it?' she cried indignantly to Cheyne, who had said nothing at all. 'It was horrible—horrible! We shouldn't have come. It's wrong and wicked! It—it isn't right! Why—why couldn't they put these things in the papers, where they belong? Are you better, darling?'

That made Harvey very properly ashamed. 'Oh, I'm all right, I guess,' he said, struggling to his feet, with a broken giggle. 'Must ha' been something I ate for breakfast.'

'Coffee, perhaps,' said Cheyne, whose face was all in hard lines, as though it had been cut out of bronze. 'We won't go back again.'

'Guess 'twould be 'baout's well to git daown to the wharf,' said Disko. 'It's close in along with them Dagoes, an' the fresh air will fresh Mrs. Cheyne up.

Harvey announced that he never felt better in his life; but it was not till he saw the 'We're Here,' fresh from the lumper's hands, at Wouverman's wharf, that he lost his all-overish feelings in a queer mixture of pride and sorrowfulness. Other people—summer boarders and such-like—played about in catboats or looked at the sea from pierheads; but he understood things from the inside—more things than he could begin to think about. None the less, he could have sat down and howled because the little schooner was going off. Mrs. Cheyne simply cried and cried every step of the way, and said most extraordinary things to Mrs. Troop, who 'babied' her till

Dan, who had not been 'babied' since he was six, whistled aloud.

And so the old crowd—Harvey felt like the most ancient of mariners — dropped into the old schooner among the battered dories, while Harvey slipped the stern-fast from the pierhead, and they slid her along the wharf-side with their hands. Every one wanted to say so much that no one said anything in particular. Harvey bade Dan take care of Uncle Salters's sea-boots and Penn's dory-anchor, and Long Jack entreated Harvey to remember his lessons in seamanship; but the jokes fell flat in the presence of the two women, and it is hard to be funny with green harbour-water widening between good friends.

'Up jib and fores'l!' shouted Disko, getting to the wheel, as the wind took her. 'See you later, Harve. Dunno but I come near thinkin' a heap o' you an' your folks.'

Then she glided beyond earshot, and they sat down to watch her up the harbour. And still Mrs. Cheyne wept.

'Psha', my dear,' said Mrs. Troop; 'we're both women, I guess. Like's not it'll ease your heart to hev your cry aout. God He knows it never done me a mite o' good; but then He knows I've had something to cry fer!'

Now it was a few years later, and upon the other edge of America, that a young man came through the clammy sea-fog up a windy street which is flanked with most expensive houses built of wood to imitate stone. To him, as he was standing by a hammered iron gate, entered on horseback—and the horse would have been

cheap at a thousand dollars—another young man. And this is what they said:

'Hello, Dan!'

'Hello, Harve!'

'What's the best with you?'

'Well, I'm so's to be that kind o' animal called second mate this trip. Ain't you most through with that triple-invoiced college o' yours?'

'Getting that way. I tell you, the Leland Stanford Junior isn't a circumstance to the old "We're Here"; but I'm coming into the business for keeps next fall.'

'Meanin' aour packets?'

'Nothing else. You just wait till I get my knife into you, Dan. I'm going to make the old line lie down and cry when I take hold.'

'I'll resk it,' said Dan, with a brotherly grin, as Harvey dismounted and asked whether he were coming in.

'That's what I took the cable fer; but, say, is the doctor anywheres araound? I'll draown that crazy nigger some day, his one cussed joke an' all.'

There was a low, triumphant chuckle as the ex-cook of the 'We're Here' came out of the fog to take the horse's bridle. He allowed no one but himself to attend to any of Harvey's wants.

'Thick as the Banks, ain't it, doctor?' said Dan propitiatingly.

But the coal-black Celt with the second-sight did not see fit to reply till he had tapped Dan on the shoulder, and for the twentieth time croaked the old, old prophecy in his ear:

'Master—man. Man—master,' said he. 'You remember, Dan Troop, what I said? On the "We're Here"?'

'Well, I won't go so far as to deny that it do look like it as things stand at present,' said Dan. 'She was an able packet, and one way an' another I owe her a heap —her and dad.'

'Me too,' quoth Harvey Cheyne.

THE END